

# JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

PART 2  
*Chapters V - VIII*



FRANCIS MARY PAUL LIBERMANN CSSP  
TRANSLATED BY MYLES L. FAY CSSP



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

# JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

*Part 2*

*Chapters V-VIII*

## **PARACLETE PRESS PUBLICATIONS**

General Editor: Brian Gogan CSSp

### **Spiritan Roots Series**

Life Began at Forty

The Second Conversion of Francis Libermann CSSp

by Bernard Kelly CSSp

Man of Action, Man of God

The Life and Spirit of Blessed Daniel Brottier CSSp

Edited by Alphonse Gilbert CSSp and Myles Fay CSSp

Fr Libermann's Commentary on the Gospel of St John

by Michael Cahill CSSp

Spiritan Wellsprings

The Original Rules, with commentaries, of the Holy Ghost Congregation

Edited by John Daly CSSp

A Gentle Way to God

The Spiritual Teaching of Francis Libermann CSSp

by Alphonse Gilbert CSSp

Translated by Myles Fay CSSp

Père Leman, Educator and Missionary 1826-1880

Founder of Blackrock College

by Seán Farragher CSSp

Led by the Spirit

The Life and Work of Claude Poullart des Places

Founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

by Seán Farragher CSSp

### ***Other Paraclete Press Publications***

Dev and his Alma Mater

Eamon de Valera's Lifelong Association with Blackrock College 1898-1975

by Seán Farragher CSSp

Something Else – Poems of Prayer

by Cothraí Gogan CSSp

A History of St Mary's College, Rathmines, 1890-1990

by William A. Maher CSSp

Blackrock College 1860-1995

by Seán Farragher CSSp

Mombasa Mission

The Growth of the Church in Mombasa, Kenya 1888-1990

by Edward Corcoran CSSp

Irish Spiritans Remember

Biographies of Members of the Holy Ghost Congregation associated with the Irish Province

by Seán Farragher CSSp



# JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

*PART II*

*Chapters V - VIII*

FRANCIS MARY PAUL LIBERMANN CSSp  
TRANSLATED BY MYLES L. FAY CSSp

PARACLETE PRESS

Jesus through  
Jewish Eyes,  
A Spiritual Commentary  
on the  
Gospel of St. John,  
Part II, Chapters V-VIII

by Francis Libermann CSSp  
translated by Myles L. Fay CSSp

First published in 1999 by  
Paraclete Press,  
169 Booterstown Avenue,  
Co. Dublin,  
Ireland.

Tel. 01-2881789  
Fax: 01-2834307

Copyright 1999 Myles L. Fay CSSp  
ISBN 0 9466 39 3 4 5

# Table of CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	vii
<b>Introduction</b>	xiii
<b>Chapter Five</b>	
The Cure of a Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda	1
<b>Chapter Six</b>	
The Miracle of the Loaves	43
Jesus Walks on the Water	50
The Discourse in the Synagogue at Capernaum	52
Peter's Profession of Faith	93
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	
Jesus Goes up to Jerusalem for the Feast and Teaches there	103
The People Discuss the Origin of the Messiah	116
Jesus Foretells his approaching Departure	120
The Promise of the Living Water	124
Fresh Discussions on the Origin of the Messiah	134
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	
The Adulterous Woman	143
Jesus, the Light of the World	150
A Discussion on Jesus' Testimony to Himself	159
The Unbelieving Jews Warned	166
Jesus and Abraham	185

---





## Foreword

Those who take up Part II of this *Commentary* on St John's Gospel may find it difficult reading. While historians of spirituality have enthused about its mystical qualities, the present day person is in danger of finding style and content so remote from contemporary approaches to Scripture that they may miss some of the treasures that lie within. Treasures undoubtedly lie within these pages to enrich the heart of the believer, of the one who accepts that eternal life is to know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Within these reflections on the life of Jesus lies the experience of one who knew Jesus intimately in his own heart. That awareness and quiet contemplative sense of the presence of Jesus, Lord of all, is what these pages communicate.

To arrive at that awareness, however, several hurdles have to be crossed — hurdles of language, thought, unspoken assumption and custom. Not only those of the biblical world but those of the world Francis Libermann lived in — a Franco-German Jewish home, Sulpician spirituality, mid 19th century French Catholic theology with its impoverished scholastic theology, Jansenistic morality, Latinised linguistic style no doubt correctly rendered by the translator, Fr Myles L. Fay, into an equally classical English diction. The journey the reader takes is two-fold — back to mid 19th century France to Francis Libermann — and secondly, in his company, to the faith world of St John. If readers have difficulty extending tolerance and understanding to times and places other than their own, this book is not for them. If they can cross these barriers, then they will find themselves immersed in a profound and loving awareness of the one true God made flesh in Jesus Christ.

Some aspects of Libermann's approach to Scripture may tend to deter present day readers. Accustomed to a reading of Scripture which concentrates on its historical and literary sense, one may find his free-ranging reflections unusual. His approach is more like that

of a medieval writer than a modern, though anyone who has used the *lectio divina* method of biblical meditation will probably feel at home with this commentary. Medieval scholars identified four senses of Scripture, the literal or historical sense; the moral sense which applies the Word of God to human life; the anagogical sense which sees the future life of heaven foreshadowed in the text; the allegorical sense which describes how the New Testament is prefigured in the Old. Libermann, following the custom of the time, distinguishes broadly the literal and spiritual senses, i.e. the first of these listed above and the other three grouped under the title 'spiritual' sense. Generally speaking, once one accepts this broader approach to Scripture, the spiritual interpretation is readily acceptable.

There is, perhaps, one exception to this. I refer to a practical kind of allegorical interpretation which takes one element in the Bible and hangs a meaning on it which bears no direct relationship to the original text. One example is Libermann's account of the multiplication of the loaves in Jn 6. He sees the five loaves as referring to the five wounds of the passion, the twelve baskets of leftovers as referring to the tribes of Israel, the fragments gathered as signifying unused graces in the Church's treasury. This kind of artificial association may not stir our hearts. However, it forms but a small proportion of the *Commentary's* text. While his deepest purpose is to bring out the spiritual message of the Gospel as he perceives it, the literal sense is the main concern of his exegesis.

His sense of the divine, of its primacy and transcendence, leads Libermann to write at times in language which seems to depreciate human nature and its embodiment in human flesh. The very words *nature* and *flesh* have specific meanings within Libermann's terminology which differ from our everyday speech. We use the words *nature* and *natural* for what is around and within us and for what most befits what the world and we ourselves are. In Libermann's vocabulary *nature* refers to humanity's condition after the Fall. In other words it speaks of that aspect of our being which is prone to sin, which tends towards evil, rebels against God. It is a code-word for our sinful tendencies as opposed to the Godward

tendencies provided by grace. Similarly *flesh* for us refers to our humanity — to our bodies, as when we say, 'This is more than flesh and blood can bear.' *Flesh* for Libermann refers approximately to the same aspect of our being as *nature*, the tendency to spiritual blindness and self-centred action which afflicts us all.

Modern readers also find that Libermann undervalues earthly and human realities. His attention and commitment is focused directly on God. This attitude of mind comes partly from his Jansenistic environment, partly from his overriding concern to live in communion with God, to put into practice the first Christian commandment, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Mt 22:37). This of course repeats the injunction of Deuteronomy 6:5 — therefore a command which was in Libermann's mind and heart since early childhood. His own relationships with others show him to have been a warm affectionate friend to members of his own family and fellow missionaries, deeply concerned that his colleagues were adequately provided for with food, clothing and the necessities of life. As a missionary superior he repeatedly put his men on guard against neglecting health and well being. His undoubtedly burning zeal for God did not prevent him recognising, using and thanking God for the material blessings which God provided for himself and his followers.

Libermann turns to the theology of Jesus' two natures, human and divine, to comment on the texts in John's Gospel, notably in Chapter V, where he speaks of the joint action of Father and Son. Some readers may have difficulty with this approach. Having two natures, human and divine, implies that in Jesus both his divine mind and will as well as his human mind and will are at work in each situation. In God, one and three, there is only one mind and one will, common to the three persons of the Trinity. Consequently, there is complete unity between the Father and Son in thought and choice. What the Father thinks, the Son thinks, what the Father chooses the Son chooses.

Jesus' humanity is so harmonised with his divine nature, that his human mind and will are perfectly synchronised with his divine

---



mind and will. As a result complete harmony exists in mind and thought at all three levels of activity — between the Father's mind and will, Jesus' divine mind and will and his human mind and will. This in brief is the background to Libermann's commentary on texts such as Jn 5:19, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.' This harmony between Father and Son stretches across the range of the Son's actions, human and divine. In his divine nature Jesus does whatever the Father does; in his human nature he thinks and chooses in perfect harmony with his divine thought and choice.

Readers may find that Libermann was so focused on Jesus' divine nature that he minimised his humanity. In this presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, he proposes a supremely transcendental image of Christ whose earthly involvements, even bodily functions like eating and drinking, are a matter of choice. One commentator notes that in this he borders on the unorthodox. One can allow certain liberties of language in this kind of exposition. Nonetheless, the general reader brought up on a 'low Christology', which stresses the humanity of Jesus, may not find Libermann's perspective immediately attractive. However, in prayer one may come to see the direction of his thought which points unswervingly to the ultimate goal of human striving, communion in Christ with the Father. As St Paul might say, our real life is hidden with Christ in God. This is Libermann's perspective. Consequently, his interpretation of the Fourth Gospel refers more to this ultimate stage of human endeavour rather than to any stops along the way.

The majesty and unity of God is one of the great themes running through this commentary as it does through the Gospel of St John. St John's Gospel presents us with what in current theology is termed a 'high Christology', that is a view of Christ which sees him primarily as God, secondarily as man. St John's focus on Christ's divinity is what Libermann takes up and enlarges to fill the screen. His approach to Jesus is that of the devout Jew to Yahweh, one of adoration, submission and self-giving. That same awareness leads him to grapple in his reflection with the problems the text poses,



particularly in chapters I and V, of reconciling the unity of God with the diversity of persons — and the unity of the divine person with the duality of natures in the Word-made-flesh. Again, some may find this difficult reading.

Libermann's reflections lead him briefly in Chapter I to expound the theology of the Trinity of his day. Following St Augustine, Christian theology saw in the working of the human mind a model which provides a glimpse of how in God there can be one divine nature in three divine persons. The human mind, as the origin of all its activities, comes to know itself through an insight from which flows a concept — a mental 'word' or definition of what it has perceived. When what is perceived is good and beautiful, then a movement of the will — in love — takes place. In God this concept, definition or mental 'word' which expresses the infinite being of the Father God is the eternal Word of God. This Word is equal in all things to the reality it expresses. The Word (or Son of God as we more commonly name him) is equal to the Father in being because he is the perfect image, replica of the Father. The Father is infinite in being; so too his expression of himself in Word — as an artist might express himself perfectly in music, verse or stone. Similarly, when the Father perceives the wonder of his own being, love flows. And because his being is infinite so too is the love infinite which follows knowledge. That love is, of course, the one we call Holy Spirit. The Spirit is equal to Father and Son in all things precisely because the one who loves — the Father — is infinite. The Spirit too is commensurate with the Father, identical with him in all things except that he is the eternal love of God, directed firstly to the Father himself — and then to creation — to everything and everyone the Father has made. This theology of the Blessed Trinity underlies Libermann's reflections on the Word who was in the beginning, '...was with God, and ...was God'(Jn 1:1). This theology underlines Libermann's commentary in Chapter 5: 17 - 30 on his cure of a sick man on the Sabbath Day.

Finally, the Latin text used in this edition is the one which Francis Libermann followed in his manuscript. The English translation is taken from the Revised Standard Version. In places the *Commentary*

---

follows the French translation the author had to hand. Where this differs notably from the RSV version, the variant is provided in brackets. The Commentary is provided in English translation primarily as a text for spiritual reflection. Scholars are referred to the critical edition, François Libermann, *Commentaire de Saint Jean*, Nouvelle Cité, Paris, 1987, the work of Frs Joseph Lecuyer, Amedeo Martins, Bernard Noel, Alphonse Gilbert. English readers are indebted to the untiring labours of Fr Myles L. Fay CSSp for this translation carried out for the most part in difficult mission circumstances. The publishers are grateful to those in Ireland and in Kenya who prepared this text: Fr Thomas O'Sullivan R.I.P., Philomena Powell, Margaret O'Sullivan, Mary Murphy, Deirdre Powell, designers Steven Hope and Alan Ennis.

**Brian Gogan CSSp**  
**General Editor**

## INTRODUCTION

Francis Libermann was not sure himself when he was born, for the *anno domini* calendar had been suspended in France after the French Revolution and it was not always clear when Year 1 of the new order began in different parts of the country. In fact he was born on 12 April 1802 in the Jewish ghetto in Saverne, Alsace, Eastern France, where he was fifth son of the local rabbi. As his father's favourite, he was meant in turn to succeed him. Francis, sensitive and intelligent, gave himself most zealously to his Jewish devotions and studies as celebrated and dictated by his fanatical father. In practice that meant he knew the Old Testament thoroughly in the original languages as well as much of the Talmud. The New Testament did not exist for him or his family and milieu, while a crucifix, as we know from anecdotes of his childhood, was an object of dread.

Unexpectedly some of his older brothers became Catholics when they left the ghetto for studies. Jacob (as he then was) also left home to study but he passed from Judaism into atheism, carefully concealing this from his father. The light came with a copy of St John's Gospel — his preference for it for the rest of his life is no wonder! — in unpointed Hebrew, which a fellow-student, less proficient in Hebrew, asked him to translate. It was not yet the road to Damascus (an apt allusion in Libermann's case) but a firm start. After more study, hesitation and prayer, he suddenly threw himself on his knees and acknowledged that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in whom he believed again, was indeed the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jacob was baptised Francis Mary Paul on Christmas Eve 1826 in Paris. His conversion was total. Straight away he asked to prepare for the priesthood and was admitted to the great St Sulpice seminary, model of strict ecclesiastical training. There he learnt the clerically accepted way of living along with his French religious and spiritual vocabulary, which of itself was ill-equipped for the thoroughly Jewish (and correct, as far as they went) notions of God that he had built up and lived by for 24 years.

Studies progressed satisfactorily until he suddenly and literally fell ill with epilepsy on the very eve of receiving major orders. That

barred one from the priesthood but he was allowed to remain on at the St Sulpice summer residence of Issy on the outskirts of Paris as a sort of bursar's assistant. Here his charism of spiritual director with a particular insight into St John and St Paul showed itself and flowered. Among his admiring student friends at Issy were two who would influence the rest of his life, Eugene Tisserant and Frederick Le Vavasseur. These two were beginning to dream of helping the liberated slaves of their respective homelands, Haiti and Bourbon (Reunion), both French colonies. They approached Libermann, first as a spiritual guide and then as a possible leader of this 'work', as they called it. Meantime Libermann was invited to leave Paris for the city of Rennes in Brittany to become novice-master of a small group, mostly priests, who constituted the beginnings of a regrouping of the Eudist Congregation after the French Revolution. This was in 1837 and the acolyte Libermann was 35.

On the feast of SS Simon and Jude, 28 October 1839, Francis, in what he considered a supernatural enlightenment, made the decision to throw in his lot with his two friends in founding this work for the Black race. The first thing to do was draw up a rule and present it in Rome. He went to Rome, where he remained exactly twelve months, from Epiphany 1840 to Epiphany 1841. While there he composed this *Commentary on St John's Gospel* as well as his *Provisional Rule* and a detailed *Memorandum* for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (now the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples).

That year completed, he returned to France, was ordained priest at Amiens in September 1841 (his epileptic fits had largely passed) and governed his young, fervent, zealous, growing apostolic band of missionaries, now called the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary, until his death ten years later at the age of 49. But one more major event of his life must be told. In 1848 at the behest of Rome he fused his society with the Holy Ghost Congregation, which had been founded in Paris in 1703 by a youthful seminarian, Claude-Francis Poullart des Places. Libermann was unanimously elected as the eleventh Superior General of the renewed Holy Ghost Congregation under the patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He died in that capacity on 2 February 1852 and is buried in Paris, as is Claude des Places. He was declared Venerable in 1910.



The Holy Ghost Congregation acknowledges both men as its founders.

Francis Libermann composed this *Commentary* during his one-year stay in Rome, 1840, at the age of 38, while still a cleric in minor orders. It has been calculated that he worked swiftly, probably completing it in less than three months, although he kept touching it up for years afterwards, without however, continuing it beyond the verse he had stopped at in Rome: chapter 12, verse 23. He wrote on simple copybook paper with a fair number of erasures, marginal notes and additions. He tells us himself he had only a Latin *New Testament* to work from, did not use or refer to any commentaries and scarcely remembered his theological studies of ten years before.

The physical arrangements were not conducive. He lived in a rented attic at the top of a building (now demolished) near the church of St Louis des Français and the Pantheon. This attic is reconstructed on the roof of the present French seminary in the same area of Rome. It is so low that the sloping roof allows one to stand upright only at one side of the room. The heat of it in the Roman summer, the time he was composing the commentary, must have been stifling. Moreover, he was living very frugally and apprehensively; he was waiting day by day to hear how the authorities had accepted his memorandum on his proposed foundation. As he says, he penned these notes to pass his time in a devout way and had no intention of anyone else ever reading them. Only his confessor's intervention prevented him from burning them. The original MS is kept in the Holy Ghost Congregation archives at Chevilly near Paris.

Twenty years after Fr Libermann's death, the *Commentary* was published in an excellent production at the mission printing-press at Ngazobil near Zuiginchor in present-day Senegal. It seems to have been reproduced from a fair copy made, with most of his writings, by the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in Paris. Early in this century it was published again with many additional footnotes which are not Libermann's at the Holy Ghost Congregation Motherhouse in Paris. A third edition, completely revised in the light of the original, was published by Fr Alphonse Gilbert, Nouvelle Cité, Paris 1987; this is the text I have worked from. It has never been printed in English but a typed translation by Fr

Walter Van de Putte circulated in some areas of the Holy Ghost Congregation.

Fr Michael Cahill successfully defended a doctorate thesis on the *Commentary* at the Institut Catholique, Paris, in 1987, in which he concluded that the specific references by Libermann to Judaic sources are extremely few. This authoritative work has been published (Michael Cahill CSSp, *Francis Libermann's Commentary on the Gospel of St John, An Investigation of the Rabbinical and French School Influences*, Paraclete Press, Dublin, 1987). Within the Holy Ghost Congregation, issue no 20 of *Spiritan Papers* (December 1986) dealt with selected aspects of the *Commentary*, to which it was dedicated. The standard biographies of Fr Libermann naturally only treat of it summarily.

It is easy enough to situate this work within Francis Libermann's spiritual itinerary. For exactly the first half of his life he lived a thoroughly Jewish spirituality, until the age of 24. The second half was Catholic, divided as follows. At St Sulpice and Issy he was influenced by the French School of spirituality. Indeed it was in the idiom of that school that he learnt the French language, so for religious topics he really had no choice of vocabulary. This period lasted some eleven years. During his two years in Rennes he immersed himself in the spirituality of St John Eudes, going so far as to copy out in his own handwriting much of St John Eudes' works. The MS is preserved in the Eudist archives.

It has been argued in two doctorate theses that Francis at this point made a second break in his spirituality. The first break had been to leave Judaism for Christianity. The second, which can be dated precisely, 28 October 1839, was the break from a seminary-clerical Catholic life to a worldwide missionary and universalist vision of the church. Fr Christopher Burke's thesis (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 1975) plausibly argues that position, while Fr Bernard Kelly's thesis (Institut Catholique, Paris, 1980) published as *Life Began at Forty*, Dublin, 1982, argues a spiritual development from the same date. The *Commentary* comes at this moment, just when the new missionary vision is added to the previous Jewish, atheistic, Sulpician and Eudist influences in his life, not to mention his very individual appropriation of each of these strands and arrangement of their meshing.

Outside the influences of this *Commentary* are the remaining ten years of Libermann's life, during which the missionary and universalist spirituality matured. Whether deliberately or not, this turning point had been clearly indicated by the moment in St John's Gospel where Fr Libermann stopped and, it would seem, never felt an urge to continue beyond. 'Some Greeks' had come to see Jesus, and Jesus says, 'Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified' (Jn 12:23). The missionary work of the Church was starting; so was Francis Libermann's.

How is Libermann's work to be classified among commentaries on St John's Gospel? It has been considered serious enough by the staff of the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem to have been placed in their library; after all a commentary on St John by a convert Jew is not an everyday occurrence and for that reason alone it would deserve attention. A glance will show that it is not in the class of scientific exegesis like modern volumes by Rudolph Schnackenburg or Raymond E. Brown, even though Libermann's knowledge of Hebrew from childhood would be the envy of many scholars. Unfortunately Libermann's was a time when Catholic spirituality underplayed the value of the *Old Testament* and we must regret now that he allowed so little of his vast knowledge of the *Old Testament* to appear in this *Commentary*. It is rather a meditative approach to the Gospel, extracting reflections and lessons from the phrases one by one. With respect it may be compared to some of the patristic commentaries, which in their turn fall short of modern scientific requirements as exegesis, yet are of theological value in their genre. Libermann's idea would be that a reading of these pages would drive one to one's knees before the person of Jesus, and the first one he wanted to lead into prayer was himself.

A helpful key to an interpretation may be the autobiographical. In the first chapter especially, where healthy, holy young Jewish men come face to face with Jesus of Nazareth, as Libermann had at 24, Libermann sees his own story in the phrases used both of Jesus and of the apostles. Later when he castigates the Pharisees for their non-acceptance of Jesus, he is implicitly castigating his father and his Jewish teachers, who did not allow Jesus to enter their lives and change them as he had his. In analysing other interviews of Jesus with people throughout the Gospel, he will have drawn on his wide experience of seminarians and lay

people whom he had directed for fifteen years and whose relationships with Jesus he knew in their subtlety.

Finally a word on the translation. Francis Libermann was over twenty when he learnt French. He learnt it sufficiently to make it a clear and adequate instrument for his thoughts but not sufficiently to become a Racine or Victor Hugo (born the same year as Libermann). His vocabulary remained limited. The work will never be crowned by the *Académie Française* for its purity of diction or for its contribution to the French language. I have translated it *telle qu'elle*, while breaking the periods into shorter sentences and using more of the active voice of the verb. But the translation remains literal, there are no paraphrases, no omissions, and the repetitiousness of some duller passages remains. The spirituality of the French School provided the only religious terminology he possessed in French. This could conceivably be transposed into terms current in some modern writing, terms like enrichment, commitment, polarity, dynamics, vulnerability, brokenness, awareness, challenging, beautiful, exciting, having a feel for or a sense of, being authentic and so on, but I have not used them; they would ring false in the context.

I wish to thank Fr Brian Gogan sincerely for undertaking this publication as well as for his felicitous choice of the main title, and all those over a lifetime who have helped me to appreciate 'the great Francis Libermann' (Pope John Paul II).

Myles L. Fay CSSp  
Enugu, Nigeria,  
2 February 1993

141st Anniversary of Francis Libermann's Death.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The Cure of a Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Post haec erat dies festus<br/>Judaeorum, et ascendit Jesus<br/>Jerosolymam.</i>  | 1. <i>After this there was a<br/>feast of the Jews, and<br/>Jesus went up to Jerusalem.</i>   |
| 2. <i>Est autem Jerosolymis<br/>probatia piscina, quae cog-<br/>nominatur hebraice Bethesda,<br/>quinque porticus habens.</i>   | 2. <i>Now there is in Jerusalem<br/>by the Sheep Gate a pool,<br/>in Hebrew called<br/>Bethzatha, which has five<br/>porticoes.</i>   |
| 3. <i>In his jacebat multitudo magna<br/>languentium, caecorum, claudorum,<br/>aridorum, expectantium aquae<br/>motum.</i>  | 3. <i>In these lay a multitude<br/>of invalids, blind, lame,<br/>paralysed waiting for the<br/>moving of the water;</i>   |
| 4. <i>Angelus autem Domini descendebat<br/>secundum tempus in piscinam; et<br/>movebatur aqua. Et qui prior de-<br/>scendisset in piscinam post mot-<br/>ionem aquae, sanus fiebat a qua-<br/>cumque detinebatur infirmitate.</i> | 4. <i>for an angel of the Lord went<br/>down at certain seasons into the<br/>pool, and troubled the water;<br/>whoever stepped in first after the<br/>troubling of the water was<br/>healed of whatever disease he<br/>had.</i> |
| 5. <i>Erat autem quidam homo ibi, tri-<br/>ginta et octo annos habens in<br/>infirmitate sua.</i>   | 5. <i>One man was there, who<br/>had been ill for thirty-eight years.</i>   |
| 6. <i>Hunc cum vidisset Jesus jacentem,<br/>et cognovisset quia jam multum<br/>tempus haberet, dicit ei: Vis<br/>sanus fieri ?</i>  | 6. <i>When Jesus saw him and<br/>knew that he had been<br/>lying there a long time,<br/>he said to him, "Do you want<br/>to be healed?"</i>   |

7. *Respondit ei languidus: Domine, hominem non habeo ut, cum turbata fuerit aqua, mittat me in piscinam; dum venio enim ego, alius ante me descendit.*

7. *The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me."*

Everything in the Old Law was prefigurative, representing what God did and was going to do for the salvation of souls. So much the more must the extraordinary event described in this chapter, which seems without object or reason, have a hidden meaning and be a figure of something great that was being done, and was to be done more perfectly in the future. There is a secret, then, hidden under the surface of this miraculous pool situated in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem represents the Church of God in general, either under the Old Testament or under the New. The pool is a place where one takes or gathers fish to prevent them from escaping or getting lost. This is why the evangelist adds that the pool was called Bethsaida in Hebrew, which means house of capture. Fish outside the pool are the souls of those who are getting lost and do not belong to the father of the family. Those inside are the souls who are being saved and are preserved by the father of the family. Hence the pool represents the means of salvation which keep and preserve souls for God.

The five porticos represent the five different revelations which constituted the Old Law and had to be accepted in order to obtain salvation: 1) that of Adam, which the Jews ascribed to Noah; 2) that of Abraham; 3) that of Moses; 4) the explanation of the law revealed to the prophets; 5) the oral tradition, which is a true unwritten revelation. By these five porticos, or means of entering into the way of salvation (for salvation was not in them but in the grace represented by the water of the pool; that is why those revelations are only prefigured by porticos or vestibules), very few were saved, because very few followed these revelations.

---

That is why a great multitude of sick people was lying there, a position which expresses inability to utilise the means offered and come to the saving water. The ailing express weakness, the blind express ignorance or blindness, the lame represent those who observe some of God's law, but in part follow their passions and finish by ceasing to make progress; paralytics signify those who totally deteriorate and no longer have movement of life. The angel who came to prepare the water that had healing power is our Lord who communicated with people long ago through an angel. The angel did not cure anyone but prepared the water of grace; this is what the stirring of the water means. The sick had to go down into it, which shows that the healing water of grace was reached through the works of the law. The words 'according to the time' show how rare these cures were. And the single one who was cured signifies the small number saved. The first to descend was cured, which shows careful diligence in the works of the law. Our Lord comes and heals by his word. The cure according to the law of grace consists in an interior gift and comes directly from our Lord. It is enough to accept by an act of our will: 'Do you want to be healed?'

8. *Dicit ei Jesus: Surge,  
tolle grabatum tuum, et  
ambula.*

8. *Jesus said to him. "Rise,  
take up your pallet, and walk."*

9. *Et statim sanus factus  
est homo ille; et sustulit  
grabatum suum, et ambulabat.  
Erat autem sabbatum in die illo.*

9. *And at once the man was  
healed, and he took up his  
pallet and walked. Now that  
day was the sabbath.*

Our Lord chose this sick man from among many who were there even though it would seem he had suffered that illness for so long as a punishment for his sins, and perhaps his soul was as sick as his body. Our Lord's words have a mysterious meaning for this sick sinner; the sick man shows how old our soul's wound is and the great difficulty of being cured under the Old Law. Thus he

showed the efficacy of the New Law, the swiftness and completeness of the cure. That is why it says: 'Because Jesus knew for how long a time': that was one reason for choosing him from among so many. His illness was due to sensual pleasure seeking; the senses are responsible for so many sins. The bed so poor and frail signifies a bad habit by which sloth and listlessness keep the soul captive, as a sick person is captive on his bed. It is a miserable bed, one is not at ease in it, but love of pleasure, which is the soul of sloth, holds the wretched sinner in it, especially when the soul's illness is protracted; the soul is unable to overcome numbness and be rid of its bad habits.

But when our Lord, by an extraordinary grace, cures suddenly ('he was immediately cured'), he then orders the cured person to get up. With one stroke he makes people get out of their spiritual sloth and cowardice and inspires them with great fervour instead. He gives orders to take away the miserable bed, to give up those bad habits; or, rather, his command in this circumstance is a miraculous one. He himself effects in the sinner what he orders. The bad habit disappears and the sinner has no more temptations. And if some remain — which is rare in sudden conversions — it is as if the convert did not experience them, it is so easy to overcome them. Finally, our Lord ordered him to walk. It is not enough to be cured and get up, that is, no longer to experience the listlessness and cowardice and be freed from lying on a miserable bed, that is from vice; the newly converted must now go forward and work to enter into the ways of divine love and serve it.

A remarkable fact was that the man carried out to the letter what our Lord ordered. It seems that he need not have paid attention to the words, take up your bed and walk, nor have accepted them as a formal command, especially on a Sabbath day. But the man had to execute exteriorly what had happened to him interiorly. Our Lord is sometimes pleased to liberate suddenly by a miraculous grace; souls which have been kept prisoners for a long time by evil habits experience such great joy that they obey his divine word to the letter and walk according to the inspirations of grace.

---



10. *Dicebant ergo Judaei illi  
qui sanatus fuerat: Sabbatum  
est, non licet tibi tollere  
grabatum tuum.*

10. *So the Jews said to the  
man who was cured, "It is  
the sabbath, it is not lawful  
for you to carry your pallet."*

11. *Respondit eis: Qui me  
sanum fecit, ille mihi dixit:  
Tolle grabatum tuum, et ambula.*

11. *But he answered them, "The  
man who healed me said to me,  
'Take up your pallet, and walk':"*

The Jews, always rigorous observers of the letter of the law and poor observers of its spirit, were scandalized to see the man carrying his bed. The law, if it was properly observed, allowed the man to take away his bed after he was miraculously cured; but their false human traditions, with which they overloaded the law, were opposed to all sorts of things that could have the slightest resemblance to a burden prohibited by the law. Yet the man who was healed, although not an educated person, understood that what he did was not prohibited, for he who had cured him miraculously had told him to do it. So he made that clear==.

12. *Interrogaverunt ergo eum:  
Quis est ille homo qui dixit tibi:  
Tolle grabatum tuum et ambula?*

12. *They asked him, "Who is  
the man who said to you,  
'Take up your pallet, and walk?' "*

But the Jews, full of malice and probably guessing that it was Jesus of Nazareth who had cured him, for he had already performed many miracles in Jerusalem, asked maliciously who had told him to carry his bed? Their great malice is all too clear. The questioners did not ask, who cured you? Nor did they say it was not allowed, even though that was the great crime with which they reproached our Lord: he had worked a cure on the Sabbath day. They asked him who had told him to do this, because the miracle was sufficient proof against their teaching. Moreover, it even seems that they did not pretend they were displeased with whoever had cured him and told him to take up his mat. They wanted to find out for sure what they were eager to know, what they suspected already: that it was our Lord who had done this, so as to have an opportunity of accusing him.

---

And what happened? Our Lord, in order to punish their malice, acted in such a way that they succeeded. They even became more hardened in their malice. The man did not know who had cured him; and our Lord, who knew everything that was happening, could easily have avoided the recently cured man. Instead he made himself known so that the Jews might succeed in their malicious search.

13. *Is autem qui sanus fuerat  
effectus, nesciebat quis  
esset. Jesus enim declinavit  
a turba constituta in loco.*

13. *Now the man who has been  
healed did not know who it was,  
for Jesus had withdrawn, as  
there was a crowd in the place.*

The reason the man did not know was that, directly after the miracle, Jesus withdrew from the crowd, which quite naturally had gathered and would increase considerably after the miracle. Our Lord worked a certain number of miracles publicly so as to impress people and inspire faith. This was all the more necessary because the Pharisees did their very best to discredit and disparage him for not observing the laws and being a false Messiah. The great number and brilliance of his miracles had much weight in strongly counterbalancing all these calumnies. Very often he worked miracles in secret or he recommended silence about them, as the other evangelists point out, or he withdrew immediately from the crowd, as in the present instance.

Why this? The holy of all holies had not to fear, as we wretched beings must fear, vanity and other faults. But he wanted to give us two lessons. First, precisely because of our weakness and self-love, his ministers, seeing him so reserved, might in turn be on their guard against being surprised by the devil. When we have received gifts and graces we must hide them in all circumstances where they do not have to appear. God's ministers, whose function it is to work for the salvation of souls, are very frequently obliged to make public use of the gifts they have received, such as the gift of touching hearts, of enlightening minds

---



or guiding souls, and so on. They have the obligation to use these talents and graces, but let them be careful about using them out of place. They must be used openly only when that is called for; otherwise let them use them discreetly, which will be the usual procedure. When our gifts are noticed let us be on our guard and withdraw from the crowd, that is into our heart, and avoid being praised for them or relishing the praise. All these precautions have to be taken even when there seems no danger and we feel no self-love.

Secondly, since the Jewish people were eager to see miracles their minds easily stopped at that. So if our Lord had constantly worked miracles publicly the disciples and the rest of the people would have been less attentive to his doctrine than to his miracles. Now our Lord did not want this; on the contrary, he wanted people to become much more attached to his teaching, which is directly for the sanctification of souls, than to extraordinary things even though they may make a good impression on the soul and fortify it in the faith. Such things do not often bring spiritual progress for they do not correct faults or foster detachment from the world and its concupiscences. They do not extinguish the natural life or make people advance in the life of perfect love. It is a good lesson for us. We must not be indifferent to extraordinary happenings and graces; rather we must love and respect them in ourselves and others; we must make use of them to strengthen our faith and love. But our constant great care must be applied to establishing the life of our Lord in ourselves, listening to him interiorly, being faithful to him and making progress in the life of his perfect love.

14. *Postea invenit eum Jesus  
in templo et dixit illi: Ecce  
sanus factus es; jam noli  
peccare, ne deterius tibi  
aliquid contingat.*

14. *Afterward, Jesus found him  
in the temple, and said to  
him, "See, you are well!  
Sin no more, that nothing  
worse befall you."*

Jesus found the man later in the temple, where the man had gone to give thanks to God for the benefit he had received. Jesus went to find him there, to give him the following admonition. 'Do not sin any more after you have received the blessing by which you were freed from the evil that afflicted you for your sins'. Our Lord says the same thing to all those whom he cures from the great chronic illnesses of the soul. Sin no more, for fear that something worse may happen to you.

The most important thing for a soul which has wallowed in sin and has had the happiness of being freed from it is fear of sin. Our Lord always inspires these souls with this fear. To fall again is a bad thing. The abuse of the grace received produces a terrible effect and is followed by exemplary punishment. It comes back to what our Lord says in another gospel: 'when a demon has been cast out of a man, if he is able to re-enter, he comes back with seven other devils worse than himself and, finding the soul adorned with the grace it has recently received and with the merits of the good works it has done, they establish themselves in that soul and frequently it is forever' (cf. Mt 12:43-45; Lk 11:24-26). The sins which were sins of weakness before become malice, and may often be accompanied by a hardening of the heart.

15. *Abiit ille homo, et nuntiavit Judaeis, quia Jesus esset, qui fecit eum sanum.*

15. *The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.*

This man, to whom the Jews had not manifested their displeasure with whoever cured him, thinking they had good intentions when they questioned him, went quickly to tell them who it was that had worked the miracle; he thought this would redound to our Lord's glory.

16. *Propterea persequabantur Judaei Jesum, quia haec faciebat in sabbato.*

16. *And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath.*

But that was not so. The Jews, blinded by their false traditions, which prevented them from taking medicine and curing an ordinary sick person on the Sabbath day, yielded to all the bitterness of their zeal for the observance of these ridiculous traditions. It is strange how human malice and pride blind them. First of all, the man carried his bed. This they considered as expressly forbidden by the law; true, it is prohibited in the prophets if it is a burden, according to the false idea the Jews had of the law. And yet they were satisfied with saying it was not permitted, they seemed not to reproach our Lord for having told him to do it. But our Lord by his cure transgressed one of their stupid traditions, which they admitted was not in the law but was instituted by the doctors of the law. So they flew into a rage and wildly persecuted him. Nevertheless their doctors who drew up the law would have excepted this case, for they certainly did not mean that it was forbidden to cure miraculously.

No matter; our Lord seemed not to respect these traditions sufficiently. In reality by working a miracle he showed clearly they were wrong and so broke the tradition. So they persecuted him in spite of that and with more hatred than if he had performed no miracle, precisely because the miracles proved they were wrong. They saw themselves convicted of error and defrauded of their supernatural authority to impose laws on people as coming from God. Being envious of the miracles and full of jealousy of the miracle worker, they resolved to persecute him unrestrainedly, still under the illusion and pretext of zeal for God's law.

Lord Jesus, how terribly dangerous are the recesses of our self-love! How careful we must be in judging someone whose conduct in the perfect life is different from ours, especially when that conduct is higher in the ways of God, especially when these judgments are accompanied by bitterness, trouble, anxiety and other similar movements, or when we yield to sentiments of over-active zeal! Lord Jesus, preserve me from that self-love, I beg you, and ground me in your gentle humility.

---

17. *Jesus autem respondit eis:  
Pater meus usque modo oper-  
atur, et ego operor.*

17. *But Jesus answered them,  
"My Father is working  
still, and I am working."*

Our Lord answered, 'You reproach me for working on the Sabbath day; and why must we rest on that day if not because my Father rested that same day? Therefore my Father's rest must be the model and rule of ours, and that is precisely what I am doing. This cure I have worked was only through my Father's power as all works of power belong to him. It is therefore according to my Father and with him that I did that work; hence it is not a work contrary to the rest which my Father ordered and which he himself took'.

Another explanation: 'Everything my Father does by his predestination I also do through carrying out his predestining will. My Father decreed and determined from all eternity the bodily and spiritual cure of this man for that day of the Sabbath and for the moment when it was done; and the operation whereby the Father arranged that work lasted until the very moment it was done. When the moment arrived, the operation or active will of my Father prompted its execution. I, then, because of my Father's inspiration carried out my Father's predestining will. And this active will of my Father continued until my work was completed. This means that I have worked only as the Father works until now'.

There is a comparison here with the act of creation. The Father ordered and the Son carried out his command; 'all things were made through him'. And the Son acted in accordance with the Father's orders as to time, extent and circumstances. Now if, on the seventh day of creation, the Son rested because the Father rested, in the new creation and in the order of grace the same thing should happen. The Son must work as long as the Father works, and rest only when the predestining movement of the Father's will ceases. This however will happen only at the end of the new creation of the world of the elect; and this rest will be for all eternity.

---



But we must keep in mind that the difference in operation of Father and Son does not point to two operations distinct in their essence. God is one, his will is one, and his creative action is one. The same will, which in the Father, according to his personality as Father, is an ordering, determining, predestining will, exists in its essence in the Son. In the Son and in accordance with his personality it operates as an executive will, as our Lord will explain in verse 19.

18. *Propterea ergo magis quaerebant eum Judaei interficere, quia non solum solvebat sabbatum, sed et patrem suum dicebat Deum, aequalem se faciens Deo. Respondit itaque Jesus, et dixit eis:*

18. *This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.*

The Jews were jealous before and had already sought to kill Jesus for the miracles he worked and for making little of their false traditions. But now, hearing these words from his mouth they became even more furious, and what should have made them look into themselves and been an occasion of salvation became an occasion of spiritual death. Jesus presented himself as Son of God and equal to God. If they were not blinded by their jealousies and fury, they would have pondered within themselves and examined the point more closely. The true traditions of the Messiah's divinity could not have been entirely lost among their doctors of the law, and the prophets are categorical on the point. But they had ears and heard no longer, eyes and saw no longer, and their hearts were hardened because they had been unfaithful, had proudly rejected the first graces and were full of passion and self-importance.

There is a great difference even between them and Pilate, who was a lax pagan, certainly full of pride and anxious about his own importance; nevertheless, Pilate feared from the moment he heard from the mouth of the Jews that he whom they delivered to him as guilty had called himself Son of God. He went back into the

praetorium to examine the case. However, his cowardice and his fear that his important position would be put at risk gained the upper hand in his conscience. But these Jews were blinder than Pilate and, instead of fearing and examining, they gave vent to greater fury.

But where did this inconceivable blindness come from? They were full of themselves and their self-love would have been horribly humiliated and crushed by him who claimed to be the Son of God. That formed the basis of their malice, closing their minds and preventing the divine light from entering. It made them afraid to recognise that he was the Son of God and made them seek any means to live on in illusion and darkness. What shows they had a glimmer of light is that they had understood our Lord's words in their true meaning. He had called himself Son of God. This could have been interpreted in a figurative sense or in the sense of an adoptive son, as we see it means in another place where it was so understood; the whole sentence could have been explained quite naturally. This understanding proves that our Lord wanted to enlighten them but, instead of receiving this beginning of light and taking advantage of it, they let their malice block out the light and lead to their loss.

They certainly took our Lord's words in the wrong sense when they understood him to proclaim two gods, two principles: his Father, who works for his own part, and our Lord, posing as another god, whose nature would be different from the Father's, having also a free range of activity of his own, 'making himself equal to God'. According to this interpretation of Jesus' words there would be two principles to counterbalance each other, whose power and other attributes, especially each one's independence, would be equal, each one having as much as the other. Of course they were incapable of conceiving things otherwise since they were in total darkness and had lost all trace of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, which was nevertheless well known in their Scriptures and traditions.

---



'That is why' means: the Jews understood that our Lord spoke of making himself equal to his Father. Our Lord explains so that we may avoid the same error. For, although the Jews were unable to understand it, he had always such goodness, love and mercy for us that, foreseeing all the difficulties we might find, he desired to explain these holy mysteries clearly. Yet it was to the Jews these things were said; they could have understood had they wanted to and grace would have been given them.

19. *Amen, amen dico vobis: non potest Filius a se facere quidquam, nisi quod viderit Patrem facientem; quaecunque enim ille fecerit, haec et Filius similiter facit.*

19. *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.*

In this verse our Lord gives the Jews a threefold answer to three false assertions they held which enraged them against him. He says to them: 'You believe that I act against the will of my Father in working this miracle; now, I tell you truly, the Son cannot do anything without having seen it in his Father. Therefore in this work, as in all others, the Son depends entirely on the Father, who therefore wills it. You are scandalized because I say that I work as long as my Father does, and you become angry because I thereby make myself equal to him. I tell you, however, in all truth, that all the Father has done the Son does also, so that not only am I equal to my Father in what I do but also in power. This is so not only in one or other activity but in everything I do, for what the Father has done the Son does likewise'.

In the third place our Lord explains their mistake about two principles. We must remember that he speaks of the Incarnate Word acting and working in time, in conformity and with the Father's eternal decrees. He says: 'I tell you in truth that the Son of himself, separate from and independently of his Father, cannot do anything, because he has only one and the same divine nature with the Father. That is the unity of nature. He can do only what

he has seen the Father do by his eternal will. That is the unity of one and the same will. The Incarnate Word of God cannot carry on in time any activity which he has not seen the Father do from all eternity. This means that the Son of God has received — or rather receives — from all eternity the Father's substantial and essential will. The Son receives this will in a substantial and essential manner so that it is executed in time by the Son of man. The Son of man is united to him (the Son of God) as one and the same person. Thus the Word of God acting in time as the Son of man, indeed completely united with him, simply executes the Father's eternal will, which he has received from him eternally'. Our Lord calls this 'what he has seen', because the generation of the Son is nothing else than the substantial and essential grasp (conception – ed.) God has of his divine essence.

He adds still more by way of explanation. 'For everything the Father has done the Son does similarly; and that is divine unity in action'. What the Father has done from all eternity by his determining will the Incarnate Son does in time in a way that is wholly similar. Consider the terms carefully: without excepting a single thing, absolutely everything the Father has done (from all eternity) these things the Son does (in time) in similar fashion, that is, in perfect equality. This means there is perfect parity of power, parity of principle, parity of object and mode; and, in general, such unity that the same will of the Father is active in the Son.

20. *Pater enim diligit Filium,  
et omnia demonstrat ei quae  
ipse facit; et majora his  
demonstrabit ei opera, ut vos  
miremini.*

20. *For the Father loves the  
Son, and shows him all that  
he himself is doing; and greater  
works than these will he show  
him, that you may marvel.*

We must recall that the hypostatic union of the sacred humanity with the Word is brought about by love, and so is attributed to the Holy Spirit: 'and she conceived by the Holy Spirit'. Therefore all the effects which flow from that admirable union into the sacred humanity must be attributed to the Holy

Spirit and are, therefore, products of love. This then is what our Lord says, to explain still further what he has just said, continuing to speak about the Incarnate Word. He seems to say in the preceding verse: 'You see only the Son of man, and you are displeased that I make myself equal to God. But I tell you in all truth, it is the Son of God who acts, and his actions are identical with the Father's, although it is a man who seems to do them and who in fact acts. For the Father loves the Son, he loves his Son from all eternity, and he loves him with the same love in his Incarnation.

'This love extends also to the humanity which shares in it and, by reason of the love in which it participates, it receives the same knowledge of the divine and eternal will of the Father. The Father from all eternity determined everything he must accomplish in time, conjointly with the Word, with whom he is most wonderfully united. And all that the Word does in time by reason of that decision, his humanity does also. Indeed, in a certain sense it is a result of the Father's eternal love for his Son that these actions, which you see performed by the humanity (of Jesus), are truly also done by the Father. Those you have already seen surprise you because they manifest the Father's power; but you will witness greater ones which will astonish you even more. The time for them has not yet come. When it does come, as decreed by my Father's will, the Father will show them also to his Son so that they can be carried out by that same humanity of his which is now active before your very eyes'.

Although our Lord from the very first moment had perfect knowledge of all that was willed by his Father, for the Word possessed this from all eternity, nevertheless he says here, 'He will show', in the future, because he wishes to express by the word 'to show' the divine will as communicated in order to be executed. As much as to say — 'In all operations or works of which I speak things will appear quite different from what they did before the full communication of the Father's divinity to the Son's sacred humanity. You think little of this now but then you will be quite amazed'.

21. *Sicut enim Pater suscitatur  
mortuos, et vivificat; sic  
et Filius quos vult,  
vivificat.*

21. *For as the Father raises  
the dead and gives them  
life, so also the Son  
gives life to whom he will.*

22. *Neque enim Pater judicat  
quemquam, sed omne iudicium  
dedit Filio;*

22. *The Father judges no one,  
but has given all judgment  
to the Son,*

For as you yourselves acknowledge in my Father the power to raise the dead and give them life so also does the Son give life to whom he will. In this world he vivifies by his grace, in the other he vivifies by glory. And so everything that has life has it from the Son. Likewise the Father judges no one but has placed all judgment in his Son's hands; and all those who will be condemned, the Son will condemn. This was how our Lord showed the incredulous Jews his greatness and power over all creatures. He shares with his Father the power of raising the dead and giving life. And although the Father's sovereign will is the principle from which the Son's actions come, the Son nevertheless uses his own power and acts according to his own will, 'what he wills', because the Father's power and will belong to him and are his as much as the Father's.

So also, after death, the Father has given all justice to his Son, so that the Son alone judges and condemns those who will be condemned. In this way the Son is arbiter of life and death for all creatures. And his will to raise the dead and vivify them and his power to give life and deliver judgement (both are divine), although dwelling by essence in the divine Word, are enjoyed by Jesus' humanity. His humanity possesses this authority so perfectly that it truly belongs to him. Jesus' humanity shared in the divine will of the Word by reason of the identity of that will with the Father's. Jesus' humanity shared in the Word's dynamism because its human activity proceeded from the will of the Word, with which the human will was united. Moreover, all the operations of the divinity whether for life or for judgment are done through the sacred humanity.

---



It follows that all creatures are in complete dependence on the Incarnate Word and therefore on the sacred humanity as well as on the divine Word. But we observe that in verse 21, when our Lord speaks of the power of giving life, he speaks of sharing it with his Father; in verse 22, when he speaks of judgment, he says this belongs to him alone. All this is in keeping with the sequence of the explanation. The Father's determining will, by which he predestines from all eternity his Son's actions in time, gives him a share in those same actions performed by the Son. So the Father vivifies as much as the Son. But because that determining will predestines no one to judgment and condemnation, all judgment has been given to the Son, who judges everything alone, apparently without sharing that power with the Father. However, fundamentally, the Father judges as well as the Son since all the operations of the divine persons are necessarily and essentially common to the three persons. But here we are dealing only with the particular attribution of predestination, which belongs to the Father and does not enter into the act of judging (which is attributed to the Son — ed.)

23. *Ut omnes honorificent  
Filium, sicut honorificant  
Patrem; qui non honorificat  
Filium, non honorificat  
Patrem qui misit illum.*

23. *that all may honour the  
Son, even as they honour the  
Father. He who does not  
honour the Son does not  
honour the Father who sent him.*

Through this love for his Incarnate Son spoken of above the Father communicates power to him even in his humanity, so that all creatures may honour his Incarnate Son even in his humanity, as they honour himself. He has put all creatures under his power, even under the power of the sacred humanity, and made them so dependent on it that they relate to him alone for life and judgment. Hence heaven, earth and hell tremble before him in adoration. Heaven and earth adore him because of the life he gives them; hell adores him by groaning and trembling at its judgment and condemnation.

He says: 'as they honour the Father'. They adore the Father as their Creator and God; they must adore the same divinity in the Son as their life-giving source and sovereign Master, who has their lot in his hands. The reason the Father wants everyone to honour the Son in his sacred humanity as they honour himself is that the honour rendered to the Son in the sacred humanity is an honour rendered to the Father. Moreover no one can render homage to the Father except through the Incarnate Son. And all those who do not honour the Son in his sacred humanity do not honour the Father either, for the Father's image is in the eternal Son, and that substantially. So the Father must be adored in his Son. But as the Father sent his beloved Son, having his own divine nature, to unite it to the humanity which he provided for it so that all the Father's divine nature and perfections dwell in that sacred humanity, the Father has to be adored in that humanity; otherwise we do not adore the Father who sent his Son to earth for that purpose: that all would adore the Father in and through the Son. The words 'who sent him' show sufficiently that there is question of divine honour to be given to the Son clothed in his sacred humanity. This sending means the Incarnation. It also means that whoever does not honour him who is sent does not honour the one who sent him. It follows that whoever does not honour the Son honours not the Father.

24. *Amen, amen dico vobis, quia  
qui verbum meum audit, et  
credit ei qui misit me,  
habet vitam aeternam, et in  
iudicium non venit, sed transiit  
a morte in vitam.*

24. *Truly, truly, I say to you,  
he who hears my word and  
believes him who sent me, has  
eternal life; he does not come  
into judgment, but has passed  
from death to life.*

Having spoken of his greatness and might and the life he gives, our Lord shows us how to behave in order to obtain that life and flee the judgment. Those who listen to the Son with attentive docility have eternal life. It is not enough simply to listen, for one can listen through curiosity or even out of malice, like the

---

Pharisees. But here our Lord means that we must listen interiorly, and this demands interior attention of the soul with docility and simplicity of mind, so as to receive the truths proclaimed. We must be of a mind to receive the divine words with thanksgiving and draw profit from them for our soul. After that we must commit our soul entirely to them upon receiving them. We must submit all our powers to them, letting ourselves be directed and guided by them, as through the power of God himself. And thereby we believe in the Father of our Lord, who sent him. This word we must accept, submitting and surrendering to it as coming from him.

This divine word is so life-giving and substantial that it penetrates into our soul, fills it and becomes its life; it bestows clarity, grace and love, establishing the very life of the Son of God in it. This is why our Lord says such a soul 'has eternal life'. He does not say that 'it will have' but 'it has', for it possesses within itself the life of all the elect in heaven, and shares in it, although not yet openly. He goes on to say that such a person 'does not come under judgment', just as he said earlier (in Chapter 3 – ed.) that those who have the light within them cannot be accused by the light. Only those who do not receive the light are overcome by it, because the divine light condemns and rejects their darkness. The Son of God already here on earth exercises a certain judgment by which he rejects, condemns and casts out sin. And for those who do not shun sin this condemnation of the sin that dwells within them falls on them. But there are those who relinquish the life of sin, the life of the flesh and its concupiscences, which are so contrary to the divine words of the Son of God, in order to receive our Lord with divine faith, as has been explained. These, instead of being subject to judgment, pass from death to the life of the soul (for the life of the flesh is a death), because they have Jesus' life in them.

It shows our adorable Master's goodness. If we have led a life that is horrible in his eyes and fit to be condemned and if then we abandon that life and give ourselves to him, we would expect him

---

to begin by judging us, making us give an account of our past life. But not at all! If faith is perfect, if it includes perfect charity and perfect fidelity to the grace received, nothing remains any more of the threat of having to pass through judgment. The Master has taken everything upon himself and makes us pass immediately from death to life. It is only when faith is imperfect that something of the former judgment remains. For as long as everything is not lightsome in us the light accuses us; but if we are faithful the judgment will be a judgment of love, which will burn up the remaining darkness of the flesh and keep our soul alive.

Baptism might be another explanation, for our Lord was speaking to people who would need that sacrament. After baptism, no threat of judgment remains, even though faith be not perfect. Our Lord's mercy, which is beyond all understanding, always deserves our adoration, love and most humble and tender expression of thanks.

25. *Amen, amen dico vobis, quia  
venit hora, et nunc est, quando  
mortui audient vocem  
Filii Dei; et qui audierint,  
vivent.*

25. *"Truly, truly, I say to you,  
the hour is coming, and now is,  
when the dead will hear the  
voice of the Son of God, and  
those who hear will live.*

To impress this truth even more firmly in their mind, he proclaims salvation, not as a spiritual truth to apply in the distant future, but as a fact, as something to happen soon, namely, that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. And again he makes it clear that although it is the sacred humanity that speaks and acts, it is nevertheless the voice of the Son of God they will hear. He says 'the dead' in general, to show the great number who will hear him, not only Jews who were faithful to the law and are not dead, or are not reckoned as dead, but wicked Jews and the Gentiles, whom you consider as dead. 'The hour is coming and has come', because from the time that the Son lived upon earth there were already some Gentiles who heard the voice of the Son of God. By the words 'they will hear' we must always understand the interior perception of the Son of God's word and the interior assent by



faith, which we considered above. Those dead whom you look on as lost will live by the fact that they accept that voice of the Son of God, clothed in flesh, because the Incarnate Son of God will give them life. That voice will become life in them.

The voice of the Son of God is the word of the Son of man, either exteriorly in adorable words that reveal truths, or interiorly, placing them in the soul by his divine grace. But both proceed from the Word as their source, and so they are the voice of the Word. And the Word is the voice of the Father himself; hence it is the Father's voice that is heard, and he who believes, believes in the Father.

26. *Sicut enim Pater habet vitam  
in semetipso, sic dedit et Filio  
habere vitam in semetipso.*

26. *For as the Father has life in  
himself, so he has granted the  
Son also to have life in himself,*

It is not surprising that those who receive the Word have life; the Son of God in giving them his Word vivifies them. For, says our Lord, as the Father has life in himself, even essentially, so also he has given to his Son, according to the flesh, to have life in himself. This happens through the Word to which he is united, which possesses the Father's essential substantial life. The phrase 'he gave' does not refer to the Word according to the divinity, for the Word 'gift' or 'to give' points to something gratuitous — a benevolence, a choice. This is unsuitable to the Word, who essentially shares the whole being of his Father. But it refers to his Son as a human being, who is his Son by assumption and not by essence. Of himself our Lord says his Father has given him to have life as the Father has it in himself; for, being the Word, he has the whole nature of the Father. And he has given him to have it by the same eternal choice and predestination he chose to be united with this particular human flesh and blood in preference to all others. Thus the Father participates hypostatically in his only Son and in everything he possesses in him. Hence, having given him the Word he has given him his life. And the Son, having the divine life, imparts it as he wills to all who accept it and submit to his influence.

27. *Et potestatem dedit ei iudicium  
facere, quia Filius hominis est.*

27. *and has given him authority to  
execute judgment, because he  
is the Son of man.*

Thus the Father grants his Incarnate Word to have life essentially, like the Father, and this in his sacred humanity. This he does on behalf of those to whom he gives life, because they listen to the Son. Moreover, both for those who do not listen to him. As well as for those who do, he has given him power to exercise justice. That means more than to judge. He judges only the wicked, who do not accept the divine light; and this judgment consists in reproving the sin that is in them; to some extent it is passed already on this world. But our Saviour has received the power to exercise justice both in the sense of giving rewards to the good and applying punishment to the wicked.

This distributive justice of rewards and punishments refers principally to eternity and procures our Lord's glory before all creatures in a way incomparably more powerful and efficacious than his ordinary justice. It has an incomparably greater effect of bringing people to adore him. In hell it produces an effect of terror and trembling before him, because of the punishment whereby the soul feels all the weight of his power. In heaven the soul experiences admiration, thanksgiving, glory and love, because of his magnificence and splendour. He rewards all according to their merits while at the same time applying the fruits of his own merit to them. All this justice will be administered by the Incarnate Word. Then the Son of man will appear in all the splendour of the power with which the Father has clothed him and be glorified in the eyes of all creatures, of hell as well as of heaven, of his enemies as well as of his blessed children and brothers and sisters.

There is a noteworthy reason for which the Father gave him the power to execute justice: he is the Son of man. St Paul in Phil 2 (vv 6-10) explains. Speaking of the Son of God he says: 'Although he was in the form of God, living from all eternity in the bosom of his Father and enjoying the same greatness, the same

power and the same glory, he emptied himself to establish his Father's glory among people, and to save people he empties himself, taking the form of a servant, making himself a human being as we all are (sin excepted). And he was obedient unto the death of the cross. That is why God has exalted him and has given him a name which is above all names, in order that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven, upon earth, and in hell'.

And so, because he is the Son of man, God granted him to have life and transmit it, in order that every knee should bend before him on earth. He gave him the power to judge, to reward and punish, in order that heaven and hell itself should be at his feet to adore and serve him. It was right that he should be exalted among the elect, since he emptied himself to save them. It is right that he should reward them, for he is their merit, being the Son of man so as to merit for them. It is right that he should have power to punish those who refused to receive him, since he emptied himself for them, in order to impart the life they refused, and since, instead of accepting his gifts in love, they hated and despised him. And so he has those powers over all of them precisely because he is the Son of man, because he emptied himself.

Another explanation is possible. In the nature of things, justice and its exercise and execution pertain to the Father. He is the Creator of all, all things belong to him. Moreover, offences and sins are lesions of his majesty and glory, they resist his will and power, all attributes of the Father. The Son of God, however, having become man to redeem us (we belong to him for he bought us very dearly and paid much more than we are worth), did so at the price of his blood.

That is why our Lord says elsewhere that his Father gave him everything (Jn 13:3). So we belong to the Son, and we belong to him as Son of man; as such he redeemed us. Now since we belong to the Son, it is right that we be judged by the Son. Our Lord says the Father has *given* the Son power to administer justice and this because he is the *Son of man*.

28. *Nolite mirari hoc, quia  
venit hora in qua omnes, qui  
in monumentis sunt, audient  
vocem Filii Dei.*

28. *Do not marvel at this; for  
the hour is coming when all  
who are in the tombs will  
hear his voice*

29. *Et procedent qui bona fec-  
erunt in resurrectionem vitae;  
qui vero mala egerunt,  
in resurrectionem iudicii.*

29. *and come forth, those who have  
done good, to the resurrection of  
life, and those who have done evil,  
to the resurrection of judgment.*

Our Lord, in order to explain this judgment more fully, a judgment for which power will be given to the Son, adds: 'Do not marvel over what I say: that the Son will do justice; for there will come an hour, the last hour of this world; and at that hour all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God for the resurrection'. All will hear this voice and all will rise. They will not hear it like the spiritually dead on earth, of whom we spoke above. The latter hear when they want to, and if they do not want to they do not hear. But these will all hear it, although in different ways. For those who willingly and actually did hear him on earth the voice will be a voice of love and mercy to make them thrill with joyful gladness. It will call them to a life of everlasting blessedness.

For those who refused to hear him on earth, who rejected him and thereby remained in their iniquity, it will be a voice of justice, severity, condemnation and frightful terror. They would well wish not to hear it and remain in nothingness, but they will be forced to in spite of themselves. This terrible voice will resound in their innermost self, spreading terror and despair throughout their being; it will be a voice of condemnation, a sentence of malediction and a rigorous application of divine justice. In other words, there will be an enormous difference between its effect on the two groups. In the one it will be unto the resurrection of life and glory; in the other, unto resurrection of death, damnation and incorruptible and imperishable corruption. 'We shall all rise', says St Paul, 'but we shall not all be changed' (cf. I Cor 15:51 Vulgate).

---



30. *Non possum ego a meipso  
facere quidquam; sicut  
audio, judico; et judicium  
meum justum est, quia non  
quaero voluntatem meam, sed  
voluntatem ejus qui misit me.*

30. *"I can do nothing on my own  
authority; as I hear, I  
judge; and my judgment is  
just, because I seek not  
my own will but the will  
of him who sent me.*

It is still the Incarnate Word speaking and speaking as Son of man. After showing the power that is given to the Son of man to judge all creatures and sovereignly apply rewards and punishments, he shows the qualities and perfections of this judgment. Although the Son of man will judge, the judgment nevertheless will be divine. So he says: I, the Son of man, who am established judge of the universe, I cannot do anything of myself although all power has been given to me; the power to judge is mine only because of my union with the Word.

And indeed this judgment was given to the Son because he became man. That is why the Father so highly exalted the sacred humanity. The power of passing judgment (as also the power of giving life) is given to the humanity only in union with the Word; so it cannot do anything of itself. But in all this exercise of judgment the Son of man judges only according to what he hears from the Son of God, that is, in accord with the divine communications the Word gives him.

The sacred humanity judges according to the light and power of the Word, which it possesses substantially. Its judgment is a divine judgment and not a human judgment. Accordingly his judgment is necessarily just, because it will be in perfect conformity with the essential justice of the Father, for the Son of man judges only in accord with what he hears, that is, with what he receives from the Word. Now the Word gives him for that judgment only what he possesses by essence, that is, the essential justice of his Father. Consequently the only rules our Lord uses in this terrible judgment are those of his Father's justice.

This shows the adorable goodness of our gentle Saviour. He has just told us about the condemnation and punishments he will

---

inflict on judgment day, and he seems to apologise for this severity as he speaks to his well-beloved children, showing them that this judgment is not his but God's.

In order to justify the holiness and divine justice of his judgment before people who might have difficulties about it, he adds another reason. He has just said in this discourse that all those who listen to him and believe in his word (which is his Father's, as has been explained) will not be judged or condemned. Judgment (in this context — ed.) will only be for those who do not listen, they will be condemned, for when our Lord speaks of *judging* he means *condemning*. On the other hand, every judgment is given to him alone. Some might object: the Son of man judges and condemns those who have not obeyed him or listened to him; now this judgment is partial and unjust. This is the sort of blasphemous suspicion our Lord forestalls. He says: 'I judge according to what I hear from above, applying the rules of my Father's divine justice to all who are in sin and have not come to listen to me and believe in me; hence my judgment is just. For, since I do not follow my human intelligence in discerning good and evil but listen only to my Father's justice, which I possess in my divine person, so also, in condemning only those who do not come to me and believe, I do not follow my human will but the will of him who sent me. Now if in my judging I follow solely the will of him who sent me to pronounce judgment, from that side my judgment is just since he who sent me to render judgment is the Father himself'.

And it is certain that the Father wills that nothing be saved except what comes to his Incarnate Son, that no other name be given whereby people may be saved than the holy name of *Jesus*, which is the adorable name expressing the salvation contained in the Incarnate Word.

31. *Si ego testimonium  
perhibeo de meipso, testi-  
monium meum non est verum.*

31. *If I bear witness to myself,  
my testimony is not true;*

Our Lord continues to speak of his dignity and wants to instil faith. He wants to show that what he says is true and that they ought to believe him. 'You hear the Son of man saying all these great things about himself, but you do not see beyond that. You hear only the Son of man and you do not admit what he says about himself. In fact, if it were the Son of man who spoke thus about himself, his testimony would not be a true testimony and you would not be obliged to believe it: 'my testimony is not true'. This does not mean that the thing testified is false, but that the testimony would not be legitimate and authentic, obliging belief'.

32. *Alius est qui testimonium perhibet de me; et scio quia verum est testimonium quod perhibet de me.*

32. *there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true.*

It is another who gives witness to me. You are not merely hearing my human word which gives testimony: it is the Son of God himself who speaks these words and gives testimony. And I know that his testimony is truthful and all are obliged to believe it because it is the Father's eternal truth. As for myself, I know the truth of my testimony because I see it and possess it personally; this testimony is substantial and intimate to me.

33. *Vos misistis ad Joannem; et testimonium perhibuit veritati.*

33. *You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.*

In order to understand the following verses, we must keep in mind that three kinds of testimonies are given to our Lord. The first is that of St John the Baptist, who came to prepare the people for the Son of God's coming on earth. He gave testimony to the truth living and residing in our Lord. John, by this testimony, was to bring everybody to our Lord and dispose people for the faith, a faith they would only receive from our Lord himself. 'So that all would believe through him (John)' (cf. Jn 1:7). For John did not

give the faith but led souls thereto. This testimony sufficed for souls which were well disposed and simple, coming to the Messiah and receiving all his divine words and graces with great docility and faith.

The second testimony was that given by the Son of God himself. Once the Son of God had actually come, St John had to disappear, because it was no longer required of him to make preparations for the coming of the Son of God and it was no longer suitable for John to bear witness. The eternal light of the Father appearing on earth was to bear witness to itself and no longer could receive the testimony of a human being but was to have such great splendour that all would see it and the well disposed would have no difficulty in approaching it. Thus our Lord gave testimony to himself. He gave it in two ways. For those who came to him ready to receive him and disposed to listen with docility, he gave testimony in the depths of their souls by the great light he cast into them, by his divine words and interior graces; by these words and graces he enabled them to know the truth itself. This is the most perfect testimony that can be given to the truth: to let it be seen in itself. Another testimony he gave of himself to souls less well disposed was the splendour of his countless great miracles; these impressed them and disposed them to listen and believe; this testimony was much greater than St John's.

The third testimony was for the souls least disposed, the teachers of Israel. These had not the simplicity and docility of mind necessary for faith, they were full of themselves. They did not want to believe, as the crowd did, on St John's word or even through the miracles worked by the Son of God. For them there was the testimony the Father had given in the law and in the prophets. Here then is what our Lord said first in the two preceding verses: 'You do not want to believe in the Son of man because he gives testimony to himself. It is not the Son of man whose testimony I want you to believe, there is another who gives testimony to him, and I know this testimony is true', and so on (as has been said). After that he adds: 'There is still another testimony given to me before I appeared. It

---



was not I who sent to John that he might give testimony to me, but you yourselves sent to him, and you know that he gave testimony to the truth that is substantially in me. Believe at least in John's word, which guarantees I am the Son of God, and in that way you will come to me, you will hear me, you will believe and then you will see the truth for yourselves'.

34. *Ego autem non ab homine  
testimonium accipio; sed  
haec dico ut vos salvi  
sitis.*

34. *Not that the testimony that  
I receive is from man; but I  
say this that you may be  
saved.*

'Once I had come upon earth, it was not I who sent people to John to ask for testimony; John does not authorise my ministry. It is not for a man's light to make my light shine and become known. But I say this through compassion for you, who are so far from the light. I remind you of what was given you long ago to enlighten you and lead you to me, in order that John's testimony might bring you to believe that I am the Messiah, the Son of God, and that you might come to me through that testimony. And then I myself will enlighten you in quite a different way, with a splendour much different from John's. Only then can you be saved from infallible loss and the terrible judgment to which you will be subjected'.

35. *Ille erat lucerna ardens, et lucens;  
vos autem voluistis ad horam  
exsultare in luce ejus.*

35. *He was a burning and shining  
lamp, and you were willing to  
rejoice for a while in his light.*

'John was a luminary, a shining lamp, because of the charity he inspired and the desires he put into all hearts for the Messiah, the Son of God. He was a brilliant light, because he taught people to prepare for the Messiah to come and made him known once arrived. He was a lamp but not the light itself: "he was not the light". He had only to bear witness to the Son of God before the Son of God appeared in splendour. You are full of darkness. In your darkness you took pleasure in the light of that lamp while it

was there to enlighten you, namely, while it was night. But now that the sun of justice is at its full the light is to disappear. The sun does not need a lantern in order to be seen'.

And so our Lord says: 'St John, whose testimony I quote for you, was a great luminary in his time. His task was to enlighten you during the night, to put you on the right road that would lead you to the Son of God, who was soon to follow. You liked to enjoy his light during the time he had to enlighten you, during the night when I had not yet appeared. But this is no longer his hour ("you desired to rejoice in his light"); now you must profit by the light he gave you. But be not content with the past; now come to me. It was for this that John's light was given to you. As for myself, who have the fullness of divinity, I do not need that testimony. Therefore listen to me and the new testimony I am about to give you of my mission and divinity. For if you have listened to John's testimony, how much more eagerly ought you to listen to mine; I know I really no longer need his'.

36. *Ego autem habeo testimonium  
majus Joanne, opera enim  
quae dedit mihi Pater ut  
perficiam ea; ipsa opera, quae  
ego facio, testimonium perhibent  
de me, quia Pater misit me.*

36. *But the testimony which I  
have is greater than that of John;  
for the works which the Father has  
granted me to accomplish, these  
very works which I am doing,  
bear me witness that the Father  
has sent me.*

'In my works I possess a much greater testimony than John'. Our Lord speaks of a testimony not only greater than John's testimony but greater than John himself, a testimony which deserves more respect, more belief than John, and whose voice is more powerful than John's. 'This testimony is given by the works the Father gave me to accomplish. The Father did not do these as he did the prophet's works; they prayed to him and he did them, but the Father gives them to me that I myself might do them through his power residing substantially in me. These

are divine works, much greater and more venerable than John, and more worthy of belief. Now these works themselves bear witness to the fact that I was sent by the Father for, if I was not sent but came only through a human power, I could not accomplish them. But you see that I am executing them: "the very works which I do"; hence the works are witnesses, and their voice is the simple fact that they are accomplished'.

37. *Et qui misit me Pater,  
ipse testimonium perhibuit  
de me; neque vocem ejus un-  
quam audistis, neque speciem  
ejus vidistis.*

37. *And the Father who sent me  
has himself borne witness  
to me. His voice you have  
never heard, his form you  
have never seen;*

38. *Et verbum ejus non habetis in  
vobis manens: quia quem misit  
ille, huic vos non creditis.*

38. *and you do not have his word  
abiding in you, for you do not  
believe him whom he has sent.*

'Moreover, I have the testimony of my Father himself, who gave constant testimony to me in the law by means of all kinds of promises to send me. It is true that you never heard his voice or saw his face, for he always spoke by the ministry of his angels; but you should at least have received his word. Whatever way he transmitted it, it was always a testimony about me. But not even this word remained in you. If you had kept this word in mind, you would have believed in him about whom it spoke. This word promised that the Father would send his Son to save you; and now you refuse to believe in him whom he has truly sent according to his promises; you prove clearly that his words have not remained in your souls. And even if they remained until I came, they are no longer in you now; my Father having sent the one he promised, you refuse to believe in him. By this you annul the promises in your souls. The promises, however, always remain and will be perfectly accomplished, but in your souls the promises are null; it is as if such promises had never been made! They are not fulfilled in you!'

According to this explanation, the following verses are but the sequel to the same words, to be taken in the same sense as a kind of complement. But verses 41 and 42 would be difficult to explain in this sense. We could say that, besides the testimony of his Father expressed in the Scriptures, our Lord calls as witness for himself Moses and the other prophets, saying that Moses will accuse them. And he calls on them not in order to get some new splendour from their testimony but because of the malice of the Jews, who did not even want to believe in his Father.

We can also explain this discourse of our Lord as referring to the testimony his Father gave after his baptism: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased' (cf. Mt 3:17; 2 Pet 1:17). And he tells the Jews that they have not listened to his Father's voice, they have not been docile and acted on the testimony. 'My Father gave testimony and "you did not hear his voice", you did not listen to him, "nor see his form", nor see in his only Son, to whom he bore witness, the image of his Father. For if you had believed you would have seen in his Son the image of his Father. But you have not that divine word in you; it did not remain in you, for you did not believe in him whom he sent. If you had the word of my Father in you, you would necessarily have believed in him whom he sent'.

In this sense this last passage is difficult to explain clearly. Here is another difficulty. Our Lord said: 'You have never heard his voice'. 'Never' indicates more than once. Perhaps our Lord wanted to show them the hardness of their heart, which made them like their ancestors, always unfaithful and indocile to his Father's voice. In this sense the following verses contain another testimony. Our Lord says: 'Because you do not have the Father's word in you, listen at least to the people you venerate who gave the same testimony; I have no need of such a testimony but you need it because of your malice'.

There is still another way to explain this text. The Father's testimony is what he gave in the Old Testament, constantly proclaiming his Son's coming from the beginning of the world,

---



especially in the law and the prophets. To understand this we must keep in mind that there are two ways of meditating upon and knowing the law. The first is that of the prophets and true teachers, like Ezra and others. They purified their hearts from all self-love and human self-seeking in order to conform them completely to the things contained in the law, on which they meditated. Meditating on it, they saw only their God; they praised and thanked him for the salutary holy things he had commanded for their souls and especially for his loving merciful promises. They entertained immense desires and ardent longings for the subject of this law and never stopped begging their God to open their minds, purify their hearts and let them know what was contained in the holy word he spoke. We have only to read psalm 119 to see that this was how the Old Testament saints studied the law. And so the Father manifested himself to them in the law in the various figures it contains. It was the Father who was more or less instructing them by enlightening each of their minds to a different degree of perfection, as David says: 'Above all my teachers you have made me wise' (cf. Ps 119:98-99).

The traditional explanation of this process of enlightenment, varying in strength, which was granted to the greatest personages, was preserved among the true teachers. These, helped by tradition, found it easy to study the law religiously in the same way and understand its hidden meaning. Moreover, the special illumination they received themselves made genuine doctors of the law out of them; they heard God's voice explaining the law and the hidden things it contains and they saw God alone hidden everywhere under these holy figures. All these holy doctors who heard God's voice, either in traditional explanation of the law or in their particular enlightenment, received testimony about the Messiah, Son of God. They found him proclaimed everywhere in so hidden a manner, as well as teaching about his whole life, his mysteries, his greatness and the humiliations to which he submitted himself. About all this they received the testimony, not from the people who wrote such things, but from God the Father

himself. And the Father enabled them to sense intimately and understand perfectly what they could not know humanly. This interior explanation was absolutely needed if they were to understand the law and its contents perfectly.

The second way to study the law was that of the doctors of more recent times and of the Pharisees, a way purely human. Instead of having recourse to God to be instructed, they resorted to enquiry and the subtleties of their own minds and transmitted to one another their explanations, subtleties and inquiries. Little by little human traditions were thus formed, false traditions which led them to fall into ridiculous errors. Nor was it God any more whom they saw in their law; nor did they turn to him in praise, thanksgiving and desire. They saw only the excellence of their legislator and prophets. Although they knew that this excellence came from God, they fixed their regard on these exalted people and attributed this excellence to them. They did not seek with great and holy desires the mysteries of God in the things handed down in the writings of Moses and the prophets. But they scrutinised the Scriptures; they weighed and examined every word, every letter, to extract some subtlety. It was not God they saw in the Scriptures but only the Scriptures themselves, dead Scriptures, which became for them a human testimony since they no longer saw or heard God truly in them but only the earthly writer and his world. In spite of all this, and although the Scriptures remained human for them, they nevertheless found a multitude of testimonies clearly referring to our Lord. There are also things their human traditions preserved, like debris of the ancient divine traditions now become earthbound.

Here then is what our divine Master says to them: 'Unfaithful and perverse race, you do not want to believe in John's testimony, you do not want to believe in the Son of God's testimony and works. Who then will you believe? Will you believe in the Father himself, who sent me and who, before sending me, had already given testimony about me? Should you not believe the very one who sent me? "And he who sent me, the Father..." But if even my

---

Father's testimony has meant nothing to you it is no wonder that you do not receive my testimony. He gave testimony and you never heard his voice in all the Scriptures, where he speaks constantly to bear witness to me; you did not notice his image; you were deaf and blind and you saw no further than your human spirit. You did not want to see anything but the earthly and you listened only to your worldly traditions or your own mind. And you have not his word in you. The divine voice of my Father, which made such magnificent promises, you never heard speaking, promising your soul what it proclaims. The promise has been accomplished and the word should have made itself heard in you working salvation in your souls but you remain empty, refusing to receive it. And why does my Father's divine word not dwell in you? Because you do not believe in him whom he has sent to accomplish what he promised'.

To understand this properly we must realise that God's promise is different from a human promise. Human promises are empty and produce nothing of themselves. They are fulfilled by a deed quite distinct from the promise itself; promises are not true or efficacious in themselves and sometimes are not accomplished. But God's promise is always efficacious and bears its object in itself. This is why our Lord says: 'Formerly, before the object of the promise came, you refused to listen to the voice making the promise. Now I have come; now the Father has actually sent him whom he promised, to make his graces, lights and salvation dwell in your souls; these are the effects of the divine promise. That same word expressed as a promise has now, in the fulness of time, become reality. In spite of all that, the word did not remain in you nor does it, because you have not believed in him whom the Father sent, that is, in the object of the promise. He alone was to accomplish these wonderful things in your souls and outside of him you will find nothing of what was promised you'. (This is all expressed in the words: 'because you do not believe in him whom he has sent'.)

39. *Scrutamini Scripturas, quia vos putatis in ipsis, vitam aeternam habere; et illae sunt quae testimonium perhibent de me.*

40. *Et non vultis venire ad me, ut vitam habeatis.*

39. *You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me;*

40. *yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*

‘But you do not want to listen to my Father’s testimony telling you such wonderful things about his Son, whom he sends you at this moment. All you see are your own views, your human subtleties, your human traditions transmitted humanly. Search the Scriptures, therefore; do not listen to my Father! Have no recourse to him! Search the letter alone of the Scriptures; listen only to the human beings who have written them; even then you will hear yourselves condemned for absolutely refusing to come to me. You believe you will find your salvation in those Scriptures. Your mind is occupied only with the practices prescribed by the law. Well, search and examine what is written and you will see that it does not contain life, rather it sends you to me alone to find life. The testimony the Scriptures give of me is so clear and brilliant that everyone can find it. But in spite of all that, you decline to approach me to receive life. Even if you came to me that way (i.e. trusting in the letter of Scripture — ed.), I would give you all that my Father promised, and the saving effects of his promises would be accomplished in you, even though you were unwilling to hear them from his mouth. Simply come! But you have not the life I alone can give, simply because you do not want to. That is the only reason, your malice prevents you’.

41. *Claritatem ab hominibus non accipio.*

42. *Sed cognovi vos, quia dilectionem Dei non habetis in vobis.*

41. *I do not receive glory from men.*

42. *But I know that you have not the love of God within you.*



‘I have quoted human proofs, recalling what Moses and the prophets felt about me. This is not in order to glorify myself from their opinion of me. However important people may be, their testimony in my favour and their submission to my name do not add anything to my glory. I have my glory in myself, but its splendour must be reflected upon those who come to me, to glorify them. If, therefore, I speak to you about the ideas of these people of former times, who were human like yourselves, as of a testimony in my favour, it is out of compassion for you, in spite of your malice. I knew that God’s love did not dwell in you and the divine testimonies would find a closed door. So I quoted people you regard as greater than yourselves, in whose words you seek your salvation. Perhaps you will finally come to me, and then I will vivify your souls and enlighten you further!’

There is another way of explaining these words: ‘If I also quote proofs of my mission so that you may believe, it is not that I shall gain glory because of your faith. I do not receive glory from people. On the contrary, I give them a share in the great glory I possess. But I knew beforehand that you had not the love of God in you and that those things would have no effect on your minds or hearts. I quoted these things to discomfit you and convince you of your malice’.

43. *Ego veni in nomine Patris  
mei, et non accipitis me:  
si alius venerit in nomine  
suo, illum accipietis.*

43. *I have come in my Father’s name,  
and you do not receive me; if  
another comes in his own name,  
him you will receive.*

Our Lord speaks about the results of the lack of God’s love and about their purely human views and considerations in things of the divine law. He says: ‘I have come in my Father’s name and you do not receive me, because your hearts are shut to everything that comes from him, because you are without love for him. If someone else comes in his own name, someone who has not the credentials I have — a person like any other, in no way sent by my Father — him you will receive because he will share your low, purely

human views. In fact that happened several times, particularly with *Barchochebas'* .

44. *Quomodo vos potestis credere,  
qui gloriam ab invicem acci-  
pit; et gloriam quae a solo Deo  
est, non quaeritis?*

44. *How can you believe, who  
receive glory from one another  
and do not seek the glory that  
comes from the only God?*

This is always how the conversion of someone who does not yet belong to our Lord comes about: the soul begins to seek and desire 'the glory that comes from God alone'. There are various ways the person is led to take the first step. They vary, but this beginning is essential. The first act Godwards must be an act of desire, which is a certain hope of finding the glory of God. This hope and seeking are obscure, vague and unclear, more or less mingled with bad intentions. The darkness comes from absence of faith. We have been created to enjoy the divine glory, our souls need it badly. God begins by making us experience a need for it through his grace, then the soul seeks it like a blind person trying to find his way. This is because there is still no light of faith. The person is not yet in our Lord, who is the Way.

While the soul is thus seeking the glory which is from God alone, God shows it to the soul, using various means. If the desire and search are sincere and true, they bring the person to our Lord, who gives faith. Having the faith, the soul is partly in possession (for in this world we possess only 'in part') and this increases and strengthens hope. This hope, which was formerly blind and empty, becomes a virtue which unites the soul to God, making it tend more ardently towards him. By faith the soul has already a certain degree of possession of its object. It sees him to be more beautiful, perfect and magnificent and has a guarantee of possessing him perfectly later on. All this is accomplished by grace and the power of our Lord, who gives it to the soul that believes in him. Moreover our Lord infuses charity. Possessing God through faith, the soul relishes and enjoys this divine treasure

---

by its will and embraces it with fervour beyond words. The soul which thus seeks the glory that comes from God alone seizes the occasion offered by God to attain it, and then faith is easily established and charity follows.

From the time our Lord lived on earth, Jews of good will had only to see him for all this to take place; and they did try to see him. But some do not seek or desire the supernatural glory that God already in this world pours into souls whom he fills with faith and makes resplendently brilliant already here below and to whom he will give the fullness of glory in eternity. People who have a pernicious attitude do not seek this renown, but are happy to seek it from creatures. There are those who are in no way interested in the honour that comes from God alone, who do nothing for God except when it will give them a good reputation, who take delight in receiving such false honour and let even their good actions be rooted in such desires. Such persons do not attain faith as long as they remain in that state. They miss the first step, the act of seeking the glory that comes from God.

What makes it difficult for them to get out of their evil condition is the fact that, even when occasions arise to attain the true glory that comes from God and receive the gift of faith, if circumstances are favourable and flatter their vanity, they will carry out those actions to obtain personal satisfaction. If, on the contrary, circumstances are against them, they will resist and become worse. Such persons cannot receive faith, which is always fighting mightily to destroy human glory in order to establish supernatural glory. People of that type oppose this tendency of faith, so that instead of union with God opposition and conflict are the order of the day.

This is what happened to the Jews our Lord was speaking to. Just consider the difference between the Jews who did not seek the greatness that comes from God alone without admixture of human glory and those who sincerely sought honour from God alone. The good Nathanael was in utter blindness about everything concerning God, yet he sought that glory. He

---

was a good Israelite, in whom there was no guile or malice. His soul had desires, blind ones because he had not the faith. The divine goodness sent Philip to him. His desire grew stronger but remained blind and without faith. But since it was true and sincere he rose and went with Philip to see, although he did not believe anything good could come from Nazareth. This shows the sincerity of his desire. He came and our Lord worked a miracle for him, by which he gave him faith; Nathanael made a profession of faith immediately, to show that together with faith he had charity. 'You are the Son of God': there we have the faith; 'You are the king of Israel': there we have strong hope and charity.

The Pharisees, on the contrary, covetous of human glory, came to our Lord, but not to seek the glory of God alone. They did not even seek it in the things they did for God — which they did to be esteemed and glorified by men. They resisted the faith God offered them and rejected the true glory that comes from him alone. They sought honour from one another, an honour that faith tends to destroy. They took no steps to seek God's glory, the only glory faith gives.

45. *Nolite putare quia ego accusaturus sim vos apud Patrem; est qui accusat vos Moyses, in quo vos speratis.*

45. *Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope.*

'Do not imagine,' Jesus says, 'that because I reprove you for your want of faith, of which you are so guilty, I shall also accuse you before my Father. I reprove you here because I wish to save you. The Son of man has not come to judge the world, but that the world might be saved by him. I will judge you on your malice and the works of darkness that dwell in you, because neither those works nor you yourselves are enlightened by me. But as for the sin that you add to the others, of not being willing to come to me and believe in my words, although the law says clearly that you must, that law which you know and which you



explain to others, that law itself will testify against you. You hope to find your salvation through Moses, because you claim that life is found in his law and in the works it prescribes. He himself will accuse you before my Father, showing you what he clearly said about me and how you would not believe in his words, which you know well'. Our Lord thus pointed out that their lack of faith was shown up by the Old Law, hence that very law was their condemnation.

46. *Si enim crederetis Moysi, crederetis forsitan et mihi; de me enim ille scripsit.*

46. *If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me.*

47. *Si autem illius litteris non creditis, quomodo verbis meis credetis?*

47. *But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"*

The Jews believed indeed in Moses' law and even thought they found life in it. They used to observe all its precepts very rigorously and added many others to be observed by the people. These were painful practices, but vanity made them practicable. Vainglory was the whole motive of their actions. But when Moses' law proclaimed things which ran counter to their pride, they had not the same fidelity. There were things concerning the Messiah which they saw being fulfilled in our Lord, things contrary to their ambition, things which would humiliate them and oblige them to submit to our Lord and his teaching; they would have to renounce their vainglory completely. Their standard would be lowered to the level of, and even below, some poor Galileans, whom they despised. They who were in the first ranks and considered as oracles among the Jews could not go so low. So they tried to delude themselves regarding all that Moses said about the Messiah so as not to see it fulfilled in our Lord. Therefore, in spite of knowing what Moses said about our Lord, their illusions precluded faith. That is what our Lord meant: 'If you had really believed in Moses, you might have overcome your

malice by that faith; you might have overcome your bad will and pride and you would have come to me and believed'. Our Lord says 'perhaps'; not that he did not know whether it would happen, but he said: 'Not I, but Moses, will accuse you, since your fault in not believing is rather an offence against Moses than against me. For if you had believed in Moses, you could also have believed in me, despite your great malice and pride. I know all those who would have believed and those who would not. I shall not be your accuser about something for which you might have an excuse, although fundamentally you are still also guilty towards me. Moses will have the task of accusing you and you will have no excuse for your lack of faith in his words'.

In the last verse he adds: 'If you had not believed in the writings of Moses, to which you are so greatly attached and in which you want to find your life, writings which say clearly what you should see in them, writings which you have well understood, for they do not testify to me by secrets, mysteries or well-hidden symbols, if, I say, you do not believe in these words, how could you believe in my words, which are repugnant to your pride and malice? You are much more culpable for your attitude towards Moses than towards me because you formally recognise him as your legislator. This then is why Moses will accuse you'.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *The Miracle of the Loaves*

1. *Post haec abiit Jesus trans mare Galilaeae, quod est Tiberiadis:*

1. *After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.*

Long after the events that took place in Judea, as recorded in the preceding chapter, Jesus was in Galilee continuing to work miracles; but, close to the Passover, he set out for Judea and crossed the Sea of Galilee; this was the lake of Tiberias.

2. *Et sequebatur eum multitudo magna, quia videbant signa quae faciebat super his qui infirmabantur.*

2. *And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased.*

A multitude of people followed his footsteps and approached him, because of his many miracles for the sick. The crowd thus followed him, some out of Jewish curiosity to see him work miracles, but some perhaps for a good intention, moved by his miracles and even wanting to profit by his words. All had a high esteem for him because of his frequent miracles.

3. *Subiit ergo in montem Jesus; et ibi sedebat cum discipulis suis.*

3. *Jesus went up into the hills, and there sat down with his disciples.*

The crowd did not follow him all the time, it depended on circumstances. But, besides the crowd, a certain number of disciples, more or less assiduous, followed him closely with fluctuating faith. Knowing, therefore, that the multitude followed him, our Lord went up a mountain with his disciples in order to

have room to preach to all the people. At the same time his mind went beyond all this, foreseeing the spectacular miracle he was going to work for all these people. The people who followed closely did not let him out of their sight; they drew near and approached him.

4. *Erat autem proximum Pascha,  
dies festus Judaeorum.*

4. *Now the Passover, the feast  
of the Jews, was at hand.*

The evangelist explains why the great multitude came thus behind our Lord following him up the mountain into a desert place, and then from the other side of the lake. It was because the Passover was near and all these people were going to Jerusalem. Knowing that Jesus too was going there and that he was in the neighbourhood, they followed him eagerly, as usual. Besides, many people were always with him from the places he visited and from nearby, but they were not really following him from Galilee to Judea, as the disciples were.

5. *Cum sublevasset ergo oculos  
Jesus, et vidisset quia multitudo  
maxima venit ad eum, dixit ad  
Philippum: Unde ememus panes  
ut manducent hi?*

5. *Lifting up his eyes, then, and  
seeing that a multitude was  
coming to him, Jesus said to  
Philip, "How are we to buy bread,  
so that these people may eat?"*

6. *Hoc autem dicebat tentans eum,  
ipse enim sciebat quid esset  
facturus.*

6. *This he said to test him,  
for he himself knew what  
he would do.*

When the immense crowd came near and the whole array could be seen from the top of the mountain, our Lord raised his eyes in order to draw the apostles' attention to their great number, for our Lord profited by these occasions to increase and strengthen their faith. That is also why he spoke to Philip, asking whether it was possible to buy bread to give to eat to all these people, as if he intended to send and buy some.



He knew well that he was going to work this miracle, for that was written in the divine decisions of his Father, and he knew that on this occasion he would give the telling instruction that follows the miracle. But he wanted to fix his apostles' attention and especially Philip's, on a particular design of mercy. He wanted them to note the multitude of people and the great quantity of loaves required to feed them, to emphasise before their eyes the miracle of multiplication and increase their faith; for later on they themselves would perform many miracles. At the same time he taught them that their faith was not yet sufficiently strong. That is what the evangelist calls 'testing'; our Lord tested, that is, he sounded the depths of St Philip's faith. Its extent he already knew, but he wished to make it clear to Philip and strengthen it. From the divine Lord the masters of the spiritual life have learned to test in this way those whom they have the duty of instructing and helping to advance in holiness, not to influence them to do harmful things, but to give them an occasion to know themselves better and progress in the practice of the virtues.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 7. <i>Respondit ei Philippus:<br/>Ducentorum denariorum panes<br/>non sufficiunt eis, ut<br/>unusquisque modicum quid<br/>accipiat.</i> | 7. <i>Philip answered him, "Two<br/>hundred denarii would not<br/>buy enough bread for each<br/>of them to get a little."</i> |
| 8. <i>Dicit ei unus ex discipulis ejus,<br/>Andreas, frater Simonis Petri:</i>  | 8. <i>One of his disciples, Andrew,<br/>Simon Peter's brother, said to him,</i>   |
| 9. <i>Est puer unus hic, qui habet<br/>quinque panes hordeaceos, et<br/>duos pisces: sed haec quid<br/>sunt inter tantos?</i>           | 9. <i>"There is a lad here who has<br/>five barley loaves and two<br/>fish; but what are they<br/>among so many?"</i>         |

Philip, thinking our Lord really wanted to buy bread, said in astonishment that two hundred denarii would scarcely be enough to give every individual a small portion. His faith was too weak to grasp the idea that our Lord's power could supply, making a

small portion suffice. Andrew, Peter's brother, seemed to have some inkling. He said to our Lord: 'Here is a child who has five barley loaves and two fishes, but what is that among so many?' What do these words of Andrew mean? Philip had said: 'two hundred denarii worth of bread would not suffice', and Andrew now talks about five barley loaves a child is carrying. The loaves could not have been very large, for how could a youngster carry five large ones on a long journey? However, Andrew did not dare to suggest that our Lord use his power to make it suffice; so he added, wanting to see what our Lord would do: 'But what is that for so many?'

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>10. <i>Dixit ergo Jesus: Facite homines discumbere. Erat autem faenum multum in loco. Discubuerunt ergo viri, numero quasi quinque millia.</i></p> | <p>10. <i>Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand.</i></p>               |
| <p>11. <i>Accepit ergo Jesus panes, et cum gratias egisset, distribuit discumbentibus; similiter et ex piscibus quantum volebant.</i></p>             | <p>11. <i>Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.</i></p> |

St Andrew's prayer was heard; our Lord said: 'Make the men sit down'. After the five thousand were seated on the grass, he took the loaves and made his act of thanksgiving to the Father for the gift from his hand. He thereby teaches us how to treat all the temporal goods we receive from our heavenly Father. We should hold in low esteem earthly goods and in general everything that does not tend to God's glory or enhance us in his sight. But that does not prevent us from receiving thankfully the goods he gives us, even worldly goods, which we must then use according to his design and in most perfect love for him. Whatever the degree of perfection we may have reached, we always have to use some earthly goods to sustain our body. We receive the things he gives us for our needs, like children receiving them from their heavenly

Father's hand, using them as well as we can, according to our condition, lovingly and gratefully.

Our Lord also gave thanks to his Father for all those who were present and would eat that bread without giving thanks or even a thought. In this way our adorable Master gave and still gives glory to his Father for all creatures unceasingly.

12. *Ut autem impleti sunt, dixit  
discipulis suis: Colligite quae  
superaverunt fragmenta,  
ne pereant.*

12. *And when they had eaten their  
fill, he told his disciples, "Gather  
up the fragments left over, that  
nothing may be lost."*

Our Lord wants to inspire us with a sovereign respect for the gifts of God. None of them must be allowed to perish, and they must not be treated with contempt. The least fragment of a gift of God is precious and should fill us with thanksgiving and gratitude.

13. *Collegerunt ergo, et impleverunt  
duodecim cophinos fragmentorum,  
ex quinque panibus hordeaceis  
quae superfuerunt his qui  
manducaverunt.*

13. *So they gathered them up  
and filled twelve baskets with  
fragments from the five barley  
loaves, left by those who had  
eaten.*

They filled more baskets with the fragments than there had been loaves before the multiplication. We see the profusion of our Lord's mercy, who always gives more than we need. This multiplication of loaves was done to touch souls and prepare them for the great things our Lord was to say on this occasion. In the multiplication of loaves there was also a striking anticipation of what was to come. This was a sign both of the graces our Lord has ready to fill souls and of the Eucharistic bread.

We notice that barley bread was used to represent the Lord, as described in Isaiah. In him there was no beauty, he was base and despicable to the eyes of people; and yet he was desired and sought after by his chosen ones who were hungry to possess him.

There are five loaves, to signify the five marks of the Passion, that is, the five wounds, which were the five fountainheads from which issued all the graces that enrich heaven and earth. This sacrificial act of the holy Passion was a heroic action accomplished only once. And although it is great and surpasses the admiration of all creatures, considered in itself it seemed insufficient to redeem and nourish so fully all the faithful souls called to belong to our Lord. But the divine Lord's merits multiply its spiritual power so greatly that it is adequate to satiate and fill all those who come to our Lord.

However, so much grace is provided that, after all the elect have been filled, there still remains enough for all the souls that are unfaithful in the Church, and even for the whole world. This is represented by the twelve baskets of fragments gathered up. There are twelve baskets for the twelve tribes of Israel, which signify the Church. And they even represent the universe; because the twelve tribes constitute all Israel, which is an image of the whole human race. For faithful Israel represents the Church and unfaithful Israel represents the whole world, which is thus a gathering of children of God who are lost, unfaithful, reprobate.

Our Lord says: 'Gather the fragments lest they perish'. This stands for a great mystery. The merits and graces contained in the Passion, which our Lord destined for unfaithful souls who refuse them, should not be lost. They go back into the treasury of the Church, also signified by the twelve baskets. (For one single thing may have two meanings, according to diverse points of view). It was the apostles who gathered. The pastors of the Church have these treasures in their hands; they can distribute them in proportion to the powers they have.

Moreover, those who collect the fragments are the apostles' principal disciples, to show that the graces which were lost and superfluous, so to speak, in the Church are gathered by faithful souls. A bad, unfaithful soul refuses God's graces and tramples them underfoot. God makes a great saint gather them, a saint



who grows in holiness. We observe this in the history of the Church. Every time a great heresy, a great disorder arises, several outstanding saints appear who are above the ordinary.

This multiplication also signifies the bread of the Eucharist, in which our Lord is the bread of souls. Barley loaves manifest the lowly character of the appearances which remain. The number five represents the Passion with its mysteries and graces. Our Lord multiplies this divine bread and, although he has only one body, he gives it to all the individuals of that immense crowd, whom it fills. He demands that the fragments which remain be gathered, lest even one be lost, to show the sovereign respect we should have for each particle. They filled twelve baskets with the fragments to show that this adorable bread will always remain in the Church's treasure, so that, after eating it, we may still come and adore the divine food of souls.

14. *Illi ergo homines, cum vidissent  
quod Jesus fecerat signum, dicebant:  
Quia hic est vere propheta, qui  
venturus est in mundum.*

14. *When the people saw the  
the sign which he had done, they  
said, "This is indeed the prophet  
who is to come into the world!"*

15. *Jesus ergo cum cognovisset quia  
venturi essent ut raperent eum, et  
facerent eum regem, fugit iterum  
in montem ipse solus.*

15. *Perceiving then that they were  
about to come and take him by  
force to make him king, Jesus  
withdrew again to the hills by  
himself.*

These people were very unmannerly and had little knowledge of spiritual things. They knew that the Messiah was to come and reign over Israel but they had not the least idea about his spiritual dominion over souls and in his Church. Their ideas were purely material. They saw our Lord performing a great miracle to give them food to eat; they could not conceal their opinion that this wonderworker was the great prophet they were waiting for; they thought he was the prophet Messiah who was to be their king, and they were very happy to have a good powerful king who could give them food so cheaply.

So they planned to make him King of Israel. They were five thousand in number; a crowd of others would join them, for all would be glad to have such a king to free them from the Roman yoke. However, since they had never noticed in our Lord the least sign of ambition, and he had never spoken to them about anything but the kingdom of his Father, they were afraid that he would not accept. So they planned to take him by force and make him king in spite of himself. But our Lord wanted only a spiritual reign over souls, and these poor people would not grant him that, for they were not docile to grace at all and had only a faint glimmer of faith. Moreover our Lord did not want anything to happen to them on his account from the troubles that would arise, so he forestalled them and withdrew to the mountains, making it impossible for them to act. He wanted, besides, to give an example to his faithful disciples, teaching them to flee from honours and earthly advantages, to transmit the blessings of grace in their power and not seek the honours of people who would admire the great power of God breaking out amongst them.

### *Jesus Walks on the Waters*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 16. <i>Ut autem sero factum est,<br/>descenderunt discipuli ejus ad mare.</i>   | 16. <i>When evening came,<br/>his disciples went down to the sea,</i>   |
| 17. <i>Et cum ascendissent navim, venerunt<br/>trans mare in Capharnaum; et tenebrae<br/>jam factae erant, et non venerat<br/>ad eos Jesus.</i>               | 17. <i>got into a boat, and started<br/>across the sea to Capernaum. It<br/>was now dark and Jesus had<br/>not yet come to them.</i>                            |
| 18. <i>Mare autem, vento magno flante,<br/>exsurgebat.</i>  | 18. <i>The sea rose because<br/>a strong wind was blowing.</i>  |
| 19. <i>Cum remigassent ergo quasi stadia<br/>vigintiquinque aut triginta, vident<br/>Jesum ambulans supra mare, et<br/>proximum navi fieri, et timuerunt.</i> | 19. <i>When they had rowed<br/>about three or four miles,<br/>they saw Jesus walking on<br/>the sea and drawing near<br/>to the boat. They were frightened,</i> |

20. *Ille autem dicit eis: Ego sum,  
nolite timere.*

20. *but he said to them,  
"It is I; do not be afraid."*

21. *Voluerunt ergo accipere eum in  
navim, et statim navis fuit ad  
terram, in quam ibant.*

21. *Then they were glad to take him  
into the boat, and immediately  
the boat was at the land to which  
they were going.*

The disciples waited for their Master until evening; but then, as night approached, since they were in a deserted place they went to the lake and set off for Capernaum at nightfall. They were accustomed to spending the night alone because our Lord would often pass the nights in prayer on a mountain. As he had already retired to that mountain and evidently was not coming, the apostles — still weak at this juncture — not being able to spend the night with him sought to withdraw, intending to meet him again the following morning. They withdrew to Capernaum, our Lord's ordinary dwelling place, thinking that he would not fail to go there unless he intended to spend the night on the mountain; then they would join him the following morning.

Moreover, he had told them to withdraw, he intended working a great miracle to increase their faith. He also wanted to give them a tangible image of what would happen later on in a spiritual way, both to the whole Church and to all her individual souls.

Jesus has them embark on a stormy sea, as during the darkest night of the soul, or one of the persecutions when it is a question of the Church, without hope of help and without being able to reach land. But when Jesus sees them helpless and in great distress he comes to their rescue in the middle of the sea, trampling underfoot the waters that threaten to engulf his children who are at the mercy of wind and storm. Scarcely has he reached them when the storm dies out and immediately they are on solid ground walking safely and in peace.

---

*The Discourse in the Synagogue at Capernaum*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>22. <i>Altera die, turba, quae stabat trans mare, vidit quia navicula alia non erat ibi nisi una, et quia non introisset cum discipulis suis Jesus in navim, sed soli discipuli ejus abiissent.</i></p> | <p>22. <i>On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.</i></p> |
| <p>23. <i>Aliae vero supervenerunt naves a Tiberiade, juxta locum ubi manducaverunt panem, gratias agente Domino.</i></p>  | <p>23. <i>However, boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.</i></p>  |
| <p>24. <i>Cum ergo vidisset turba quia Jesus non esset ibi, neque discipuli ejus, ascenderunt in naviculas, et venerunt Capharnaum, quaerentes Jesum.</i></p>  | <p>24. <i>So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.</i></p>  |

After the crowd had eaten the miraculous bread and listened to what our Lord had to say to dismiss them, instead of withdrawing they remained there, hoping he would come down from the mountain, and then they would either make him king or follow him, so as to get plenty of food every day. So they took notice of everything going on and waited until evening. They saw the apostles leaving alone without their Master, they noticed also that there were no other boats, so they dispersed into towns and villages nearby to spend the night. No doubt some also went to Tiberias, a city situated on the lake which bears that name. There they spread the news about the miracle and told the story of Jesus retiring to the mountain from which he had not returned.

The following day the whole crowd went back to the place where they had been miraculously fed hoping to find Jesus again and get a good meal provided miraculously. At Tiberias the news had spread, together with the report that the disciples had gone

---



towards Capernaum. So a great number of boats came near the mountain to bring the crowds to Capernaum, as well as to transport people there who had come from Tiberias. Altogether these constituted a great multitude.

When the crowd arrived to find neither Jesus nor his disciples, they reasoned that the latter had gone to Capernaum and that Jesus too was there; otherwise the disciples would have returned to the mountain in the early morning. Therefore, many went on board the boats that had come from Tiberias and crossed to Capernaum seeking Jesus. Those who truly seek Jesus will always find him, however imperfect their dispositions.

25. *Et cum invenissent eum trans mare, dixerunt ei: Rabbi, quando huc venisti?*

25. *When they found him on the other side of the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"*

Having found Jesus on the other side of the lake — the gospel does not say that it was at Capernaum they found him; it says only that they went in that direction — they said to him: 'Master, when did you come here? Yesterday we waited for you until nightfall, and today we went very early to the lakeshore without finding you'. By such words they wanted to indicate that they had searched for him and had waited on the other side where they thought he still was.

26. *Respondit eis Jesus, et dixit: Amen, amen dico vobis, quaeritis me, non quia vidistis signa, sed quia manducastis ex panibus, et saturati estis.*

26. *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.*

These people had faith and believed that our Lord was the Messiah; at least they believed he was a prophet. But they were coarse people, whose sentiments did not rise above the coarse things of earth. Their faith was weak, immature and blind, as was to be expected of people who were wholly committed to

the earthly life and whose thoughts never rose to supernatural things. They had seen miracles, in which they recognised the hand of God, but that did not generate proper sentiments in them. They did not praise or bless God and made no effort to improve. But they wanted to take advantage of miracles to satisfy their earthly desires and use them for worldly purposes. They had eaten well, and were hoping that our Lord would perform new miracles to satisfy their earthly needs.

So our Lord instructed them: 'You seem to be coming to me with sentiments of faith, and you speak to me like those who seek me with real attachment. But, to tell you the truth, I say to you, you seek me, not because you have seen a miracle and out of a sentiment of pure faith but because you have eaten and been filled. It is because I gave you earthly goods that you come. You have eaten coarse bread and are satisfied. But supernatural bread makes no impression on you and in this you behave quite badly'.

27. *Operamini non cibum, qui perit,  
sed qui permanet in vitam aeternam,  
quem Filius hominis dabit  
vobis; hunc enim Pater signavit  
Deus.*

27. *Do not labour for the food which  
perishes, but for the food which  
endures to eternal life, which the  
Son of man will give to you; for on  
him has God the Father set his  
seal."*

Do not stop at food that perishes, of which nothing will remain. Do not concentrate your soul's attention on it, or be preoccupied about it. Rise above that and apply yourself to a meal that lasts eternally. The human repast you are thinking about, to which alone you apply your soul's attention, sustains only a life that is perishable and temporary, while the repast to which you should give serious attention is a spiritual one that will last into eternal life. This spiritual repast the Son of man will give you, just as he has given you an earthly and perishable repast, an image of the one to come. For this is the repast which my Father, who is God, had in mind in sending me upon earth to perform the works you see me do.

If you saw me prepare an earthly meal, although this was done as willed by my Father, my Father had no other end in view than the spiritual banquet. This is the only one he approves; the other was given in view of it. Those who stop at what is external are not in tune with his intention. And he himself disapproves of those who interpret his activity in purely material terms. That is the meaning of 'he has sealed'. He marks it with the seal of his authority. And he gives the reason, saying: 'Him has God the Father sealed'. He is 'God,' therefore he is 'Spirit,' his activities are spiritual; spiritual also is the life he gives, the life he wants his Son to give.

Note the two terms 'Labour not (for the food which perishes)' and '(which the Son of man) will give you'. The two terms bring out the two most important points about the life of grace and the spiritual food we receive; on the one hand, we have to strive to be faithful to our Lord; on the other hand our Lord alone vivifies us by his divine grace. It would be wrong for us to remain idle, saying that our Lord must feed us so that we can carry out the works of his grace and that he must give us life and holiness since that depends solely on him. We must lend our cooperation in order to obtain these graces and make them prosper. On the other hand, we should not say that it is by our own efforts we receive this food and attain this life of holiness; our Lord alone can give it.

That is why the divine Master says: For your part labour for this spiritual repast, which the Son of man will give you; dispose yourselves properly, tend towards it, be faithful, and then you will obtain mercy not because of your cooperation and your activity, but because of the Son of man who gives you this life. It is through his labours and sufferings that the Son of God merited this life for us. These infinite merits won by the Son of God bear fruit in our lives and works. They have been acquired, nevertheless, and their fruits made available to us in this way, by the sacred humanity of Jesus.

28. *Dixerunt ergo ad eum: Quid  
faciemus ut operemur opera Dei?*

28. *Then they said to him, "What  
must we do, to be doing the  
works of God?"*

The Jews understood that our Lord was speaking about the supernatural works they had to do to please his Father and attain to eternal life. So they asked him: What must we do to perform the works of God? What must we do, that is, in what way must we do them, by what means can we make our works supernatural? What are the works we should do that we may do them as supernatural works?

29. *Respondit Jesus et dixit eis:  
Hoc est opus Dei, ut credatis  
in eum quem misit ille.*

29. *Jesus answered them, "This is the  
work of God, that you believe  
in him whom he has sent."*

The Jews' idea (of pleasing God) was always concerned with external practices and activities. So when our Lord spoke to them about labouring for eternal life they thought he wanted them to do certain things which they were not yet doing; so they asked: Which works are works of God? How can we do godly works? That is why our Lord answered: that which makes a work godly is not the fact that it belongs to a particular kind of activity. The works of God are those inspired by the faith people have in him whom he has sent.

Faith is the essential element in any godly work. If one were to observe all the commandments of God, but do so without faith, they would be dead works. The spiritual worth of any activity derives from the inner spirit of those who carry it out. God sent his Son in order that all our actions might be done in him and through faith. This comes about by the submission of all the powers of our souls to the graces he gives us under the influence of his Spirit. Every work done with such submission to our Lord, by the inspiration of his divine Spirit and under the influence of his grace, is a work of God, for it comes from God, who sent his Son to share with us all that we have from God.



Whatever in our works comes from us, from our nature, from our desires and personal affections, is not a work of God because it does not come from the Son whom he sent. Hence such an action is not of God, even when we act for a good natural purpose and perform good actions in accordance with natural reason. Such actions are not works of God because God is not truly their principle; they are not done in him, because they are not done through the inspiration of his Son and under his influence. We must know that our Lord does not mean that all we need is faith and that we need not perform works, that works are useless. This would not be right, for he speaks of 'a *work* of God,' and earlier he says 'labour'. This indicates that he does not exclude works. He merely wants to show that the spiritual worth of such works consists in faith and not in the works themselves. What pleases God in our activity is what comes from him, the faith by which we are united with him, and not the external action we perform.

Since human beings are composed of body and soul, there is necessarily in our works something coming from both body and soul; there are material or sensible aspects to our activity as well as spiritual. Interior faith is the soul of any work and gives it (eternal – ed.) life. The external work is the body so to speak. Without interior faith it is like a body without a soul. This is not to say that purely inward activity is impossible; on the contrary, it is more perfect. But we cannot live solely by that interior life without external works. He who would pretend to live that way would be a proud person; his external actions would not only be dead, since God would not be their principle and soul, but they would even be soul-killing for such a one, because they would be the product of pride in opposition to our Lord. All the perfection then, all the holiness and life of our works, dwell in that interior faith and life of grace; and all the merit of our external activity must come from that. But what is done externally must correspond to the interior spirit; it must be in perfect harmony and relationship with the dispositions and actions of our heart. We must concentrate primarily on trying to be perfect in our inner

world and so be able to instil into all our works this perfection and supernatural life. But we should not, on that account, refrain from practical action as the opportunity arises. We will do them for God's glory, and according as God asks of us, always however putting the emphasis on our dispositions.

30. *Dixerunt ergo ei: Quod ergo tu facis signum, ut videamus et credamus tibi? Quid operaris?*

30. *So they said to him "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"*

31. *Patres nostri manducaverunt manna in deserto, sicut scriptum est: Panem de caelo dedit eis manducare.*

31. *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'."*

In spite of the miracles they had witnessed, theirs was an unsteady faith; it was not even a true faith because it was without supernatural ideas. It was a sort of admiration mingled with the satisfaction of their self-love, with curiosity and self-interest. They saw works of great power, extraordinary works, and they could not help seeing that there was something superhuman in them. Moreover, our Lord's divine word and action were themselves bearers of so great a grace that they inevitably touched and attracted them. But grace could only touch them lightly; it did not penetrate the majority of them. They were so carnal, so concerned with worldly things, and so exclusively set on their own satisfactions, interests and vainglory that they rejected all the rays of light coming to strike them. This explains why they were all the time, as it were, drawn to follow our Lord while still constantly resisting him.

At the same time they admired him and said he was a prophet, even the Messiah. In this circumstance, we see particularly well their insatiable curiosity and eagerness for miracles. 'What sign do you perform that we may believe?' They had seen innumerable miracles in Jerusalem and Capernaum and wherever our Lord

went. Especially had they just witnessed the great miracle that made them proclaim him the prophet sent from God; and now they asked: 'What sign do you perform that we may believe?' Their dispositions prevented grace from entering and establishing faith in them. So all the miracles produced only a passing feeling of increasing curiosity.

But there is more to it than that; still another interest enters into their petition. It is what our Lord had reproached them with, but immediately they fell into the same fault again. It goes to show how little spiritual advantage they drew from his divine instructions and that his words, so admirable, so full of grace and so effective, did not enter into those carnal, earthly-minded souls. They had been fed by a miracle which they made little of now. It was not enough, they wanted manna. 'Moses gave us bread from heaven; you, who come and want us to believe in you, make bread descend from heaven as Moses did'.

32. *Dixit ergo eis Jesus: Amen, amen dico vobis, non Moyses dedit vobis panem de caelo, sed Pater meus dat vobis panem de caelo verum.*

32. *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.*

Jesus replied: 'I tell you the truth: it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven. The bread that Moses gave was not the true bread from heaven. It was only a foreshadowing of the bread that was going to be given by my Father. Our Lord uses this turn of phrase to designate the heavenly bread which Moses and his law had not the power to give, for it was a law which merely prefigured what was to come. So all that was given into Moses' power and all that Moses gave the Israelites was not the truth. 'But my Father now gives you bread that has in fact descended from heaven in the fulness of time. This is the bread that Moses prefigured when he gave the manna, bread which did not in fact come from heaven. Hence you now possess more than the bread Moses gave your ancestors'.

---

33. *Panis enim Dei est, qui de  
caelo descendit, et dat vitam  
mundo.*

33. *For the bread of God is that  
which comes down from heaven,  
and gives life to the world."*

The Jews quoted the text 'the bread of angels' to show what bread Moses had given to their ancestors. Our Lord said that Moses' bread was only a figure of the true bread of heaven which his Father was presently giving, and added: 'This bread is truly heavenly bread given by my Father because not only is it the bread of angels, but it is the bread of God himself, which descends from heaven, that is, from the bosom of my Father, and gives life to the world'. Coming to take up its dwelling in souls, it nourishes and vivifies them by its divine grace and by itself makes people live, as people live by bread; in other words it is real food, for in sacred Scripture food is almost always called bread.

This bread is the very bread of God, not in the sense that it gives its life to the Father to nourish and sustain him as bread does our bodies, but in the sense that the Father possesses in himself from all eternity his only Son, who is the Word of God, who is his very life. (The Father's life is in the Son, and the Son's life is in the Father). That life is his only joy and his only love. This adorable Word, this life of the Father, this God-bread and bread-of-God, is given to us to become the bread of our souls and to give us life. What goodness, what mercy, what incomprehensible love of God for his poor creature! To this rebellious creature, this creature that is dead in its wickedness and malice, the Father gives the bread of life!

34. *Dixerunt ergo ad eum: Domine,  
semper da nobis panem hunc.*

34. *They said to him, "Lord,  
give us this bread always."*

The still blind and earthly-minded Jews thought our Lord was talking about temporal bread that his Father was going to give them, a kind of bread far superior to the manna. They knew that the Messiah would be much greater and more powerful than Moses and so they said to themselves that the bread the



Messiah would give would be more wonderful than Moses' bread. Moreover, our Lord said so explicitly. That is why they eagerly requested this bread for, after all, they were touched by our Lord's words.

35. *Dixit autem eis Jesus: Ego sum panis vitae, qui venit ad me, non esuriet; et qui credit in me, non sitiet unquam.*

35. *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.*

Jesus explained himself more clearly: 'I am this bread of life I told you about, I who descended from heaven to give life to the world'. He calls himself the bread of life, making a comparison with material bread. But there is a great difference between material bread and our Lord. Material bread does not give life, it merely prevents death and even that not entirely. For, although ordinary bread helps to make a person recover what he daily loses, eventually he wastes away and his life is not really improved by eating this bread. On the contrary, the divine bread which descended from heaven is a true bread of life. It gives true life, even to the dead, and increases the life of the living. However, earthly bread only gives life for the body, a life which is not true life but only a figure of the true life, which is in God and which the bread of God gives us. That is why our Lord calls the heavenly bread, 'bread of life'. There is still another reason: this heavenly bread contains life in itself and imparts it: 'He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst'.

There is still one more excellence in the divine bread to raise it high above ordinary bread. The latter perishes in the act of nourishing, and the one who eats, a short time later, is as hungry as before. On the contrary, the bread of God does not perish when we eat it; it remains within us and the more it does the more it fills and satiates us. The more our soul digests this bread and changes into life the nourishing substances it imparts, the more this adorable bread spreads in the soul and provides new,

greater, stronger nourishment. Only when the soul rejects this bread does it lose life; when it keeps it, it is increasingly satisfied and revitalised.

In fact one eats this bread only once, in the spiritual sense. The soul eats this bread, first by coming to our Lord. Once restored to favour it receives his divine Spirit; afterwards the soul has only to absorb the nourishment that this bread of life — which will always remain within it — provides. The soul will never suffer hunger as long as it does not reject this adorable bread. This is what our Lord says: 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me (that is by "spiritual eating") will no longer hunger; because I shall always remain in him to satisfy him'.

Our Lord adds that he who believes in him will no longer thirst. By believing in him all our desires are fulfilled. This indigence of the soul and these ardent desires, the violent appetite for what can satisfy it (symbolised by this thirst), are satisfied by means of the faith that enables the soul find its happiness and joy in our Lord (cf. Jn 4:13).

36. *Sed dixi vobis, quia et vidistis  
me, et non creditis.*

36. *But I said to you that you have  
seen me yet do not believe.*

Our Lord, who knows everything that takes place in the heart, saw all the Jews' sentiments when he said he was the bread of life that he had been speaking about; that is why he said: 'All the good things I have just spoken of are within me and will be imparted to those who come to me and believe in me'. I have already told you on other occasions that you see me with the eyes of your body; you even see something with the eyes of your mind because of the miracles I work; you see me as sent by God, and you do not believe. It is not enough to come to me by being bodily present and following me in that way, nor is it enough to manifest a certain desire to listen to my word and see my works. What you need is interior faith and this you lack. That is why you will not receive the good things I give to those who are mine,

because you do not come to me. And if you do not come to me, it is not my fault but yours’.

37. *Omne quod dat mihi Pater, ad me veniet, et eum qui venit ad me, non ejiciam foras.*

37. *All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.*

Now you are incredulous and far away from the good things I give. However, some of you will come to me later on, as well as some of the rest of the people. All that the Father gives me will come to me. That is the great law of eternal predestination of the elect. My Father has decided that a certain number will come to me to remain always in me. These he has given to me, and all these will come sooner or later, according to the eternal appointment of the Father. And none of those who will come shall I cast out, but I will receive them into myself where they will remain for all eternity’.

We could also say: “All that the Father gives me will come to me:” those who, according to the determination of my Father, are to enter into his Church and be numbered among those who have the faith will come to me. And if some leave, it is not I who shall have rejected them, it will be their own fault that they left’.

38. *Quia descendi de caelo, non ut faciam voluntatem meam, sed voluntatem ejus qui misit me.*

38. *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me;*

Our Lord explains why he accepts those whom his Father gives him so completely by their eternal predestination. Only those whom the Father has given to the Son can enter into the eternal kingdom, and the Son does not cast out of the body of the elect those who are given to him. In fact, by explaining the preceding verse as a donation of the Father, our Lord wants to bring out the predestination of the souls that will be his for all eternity. To accomplish this predestination, the Father decreed the Incarnation of his Son from all eternity and he fulfilled it in

time. For in the Incarnation of the Son of God we discover two designs: God offers his Son to all the world, truly and effectively, as is clear in verse 32: 'my Father gave you the true bread from heaven'. Here Jesus was speaking to those who did not believe. There was also a more particular plan to give his Son to his elect; he draws these to his Son by an efficacious and permanent attraction, they come and remain in him. This is shown by the words, 'All that the Father gives'.

This gift is in perpetuity and hence it is a perfect choice, not a mere momentary attraction, like that mentioned in verse 44. Now, since the Son was sent by his Father, that is, since he became incarnate solely in order to accomplish this twofold design — and more particularly the second one — it follows that he does not reject those whom his Father gave him. For since he was sent for this purpose only, his whole life and work on earth must be in accord with the will of him who sent him. If he did something else, it would be doing his own will, independently, and separately from the will of him who sent him.

Our Lord always calls his Incarnation and his coming upon earth a 'mission' or a 'sending' by his Father. From this we should not foolishly conclude that the Word separated himself from the Father, that he left the bosom of the Father to come into Mary's womb and unite himself to the humanity formed by the Holy Spirit. The Son can no more leave his Father than he can leave himself, for he is as consubstantial with the Father as he is with himself, in nature and essence. Neither should we believe with like foolishness that the Son is inferior to the Father because one who sends is always more than the one who is sent. Nor must we interpret the submission to the will of his Father as an inferior submission to the will of his superior. By the very fact that Father and Son are consubstantial in nature and essence they are also equal in power and all other perfections. Hence there is no superiority in his Father's will nor inferiority in the Son's obedience. The Word exercises and executes his own will when executing his Father's will. This divine will is also his as Jesus is



consubstantial with the Father in that he shares the divine nature (which includes divine intellect and will — ed.).

The Incarnation and consequently all the other works done by the Incarnate Word are named 'mission' and 'sending', because these works take place outside the eternal and essential bosom of the Father, the result of a creative act. These works are done by the Son personally and substantially present. This personal and substantial presence of the Son working outside the bosom of his Father is called 'mission' or 'sending'. It is the Father who sends because the Father from all eternity generates his Son (as God — ed.) within the divine being. He has generated the Son in time in Mary's womb in order to unite him to that sacred humanity which was conceived at that very moment in this virginal and glorious womb.

Although it is absolutely true that it is the Son who is sent and that neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit became incarnate, this nevertheless does not prevent the three divine persons from being equal in power and from having an equal part in bringing it about. The contribution of Father and Spirit is equal to that of the Son, although because of the differences between the personalities their operations are different.

Thus the Incarnation was accomplished by the Holy Spirit: 'And he was incarnate by the Holy Spirit'. It was essentially a work of love, a work of the Holy Spirit. The Son came down from heaven, he emptied himself. Here we see a power proper to the Son: he descended, he emptied himself. It is not the Father who brought him down, nor the Father who emptied him, but the Son of himself. The Father 'sends' him because he 'generates' him, but the same power and equality is in everything pertaining to that work as everywhere else.

39. *Haec est autem voluntas ejus  
qui misit me, Patris, ut omne,  
quod dedit mihi, non perdam  
ex eo, sed resuscitem illud in  
novissimo die.*

39. *and this is the will of him who  
sent me, that I should lose  
nothing of all that he has given  
me but raise it up at the last day.*

In this discourse our Lord has now finished explaining the great mystery of the predestination of the elect. Notice that he speaks only of predestination to life; in no way does he speak of a predestination to death, because it is his Father's will that all should be saved. He does not want anyone of his creatures to perish. However, by a special and extraordinary predilection, a certain number are particularly chosen and given to his Son, and all those whom the Father gives to his Son the Son does not reject, for he came to fulfill the will of him who sent him, that the Son should not lose anyone of those who were given to him.

Of these he takes special care in conformity with that special will of predilection. And to them he gives and applies graces with particularly great attention and with extraordinary abundance, well-fitted to the circumstances, dangers and temptations the chosen ones may meet. So he preserves them in union with himself through the faith he speaks about, and at times he brings them to the heights of sanctity. He thus strengthens them in their weakness, powerfully counterbalancing the malice and all the vices of nature by his grace, so that the soul becomes faithful and persevering and even wholly transcends itself becoming perfect, thanks to the superabundance of grace. This grace is measured by the superabundance of the Father's eternal concern for the advancement of that soul. This grace constitutes the perfection and holiness of a soul, through the soul's fidelity.

Notice that our Lord not only says that those whom his Father gives will come, but that they surely will come. Others whom his Father has not given him with this perfect donation will also come. He adds: 'And of all those who come to me, I will not reject any'. He does not say: 'All those whom my Father gives me, I will not reject, but those who *come* to me'.

We can also explain all these texts in this way: (v. 36) 'You see well who I am, and you do not believe. (v. 37) And yet I know that those whom my Father gives me will come to me'. He then adds speaking of all believers: 'All those who come to me I will not reject, even when they were not given to me by my Father. And so

it is your fault if you do not come and if you do not persevere after you have come, for I do not reject anyone'. (Notice the phrase, 'I will not cast out'.)

'I tell you that I shall not reject anyone of those who come to me, because I have not come to do my own will (v. 38), and if I were to reject anyone it could only be by a will separated from my Father's, a thing which is impossible, for I have come to do the will of him who sent me. Now it is his will that I should come to give my life for the whole world!' As he had said above: 'But the Father gives you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world;' he says 'to the world', without exception.

This then is the Father's will for all his creatures in general, applicable to each one in particular. And now our Lord manifests another will of his Father, which he is to fulfill only for the elect (v. 39). 'Here is the will of him who sent me, who is the Father of all that exists, and hence the Master of all that he wills for his creatures — the will of him who sent me for those he has given me by a special predilection. He desires that I should not lose anyone, but that I should raise them up at the end of time'. Here is something we find added. He does not say it is his Father's will that he should not reject anyone, but that he should not lose anyone. A human comparison may bring out the difference. When we entrust very ordinary objects to someone, things for which we have no strong attachment, but want kept if possible, we say: 'Do not throw it away; however, you need not give it excessive care'. On the contrary, if we give people precious pearls, we tell them to take good care that none gets lost, and to take all necessary precautions. And this is the way the elect do not get lost; they are too well guarded. If some do, they were lost because they were not too well guarded, and because of their malice; therefore it is their own fault; they have not been cast out.

Our Lord says 'everything' in the singular, because he is speaking of the assembly of the elect who have been given to him, who form only one and the same body. This donation of which our

Lord speaks (those whom the Father has given me) does not mean the general donation of all things which John the Baptist spoke of at the end of chapter three, 'the Father has given all things into the hand' (of the Son). Here it concerns the donation of the elect whom the Father has given to the Son that they may be his Mystical Body and that his Son may be its head.

40. *Haec est autem voluntas  
Patris mei qui misit me: ut  
omnis qui videt Filium et credit  
in eum, habeat vitam aeternam;  
et ego resuscitabo eum in  
novissimo die.*

40. *For this is the will of my  
Father, that every one who sees  
the Son and believes in him  
should have eternal life; and I will  
raise him up at the last day."*

In the preceding verse our Lord recalled and explained his Father's will as revealed to him about the elect. In the present verse he recalls and explains his Father's will in general, for in this chapter he does not speak at all about those who are condemned or who have refused to come to him. Here then is what he says about that general will of his Father for all who come to him: 'This is my Father's will who sent me. He wants all those who see the Son of God and believe in him to have eternal life'. Now all those who see him can believe, yet all who see him do not in fact believe, and it is their own fault. That is why it is not the Father's will that all these should have eternal life, for that life is only to be found in his Son.

What will happen to them? They will be condemned, through their own fault; they have seen and not believed. This was precisely the condition of the Jews to whom our Lord was speaking. They saw, for they had said: this is truly the prophet who is to come, that is, the Messiah. And yet they did not believe, as we see, from all their words and especially the words of the following verse. And this is what our Lord said in v. 36. Note that when our Lord says 'he who sees', he is not speaking only of bodily sight but of seeing with the spirit, with the mind. For that is the way things come about. God begins by giving the mind a



view of what must be the object of faith. This is a spiritual view – more or less with elements belonging to the senses according to the degree grace influences the senses.

This sight is not wholly clear and penetrating, as it is in a soul that already has faith. This view is not faith; faith is in the assent of the mind to the object it sees, and in order that it may acquiesce God gives a new grace to arouse and captivate the will. And so, although faith is a special virtue of the intellect, an act of the will is also necessary; by this act the intellect clings to our Lord. It is for this that a stimulating grace is needed for the will, and the soul which is faithful to this grace and follows it already has the faith. So much the more is this stimulating grace necessary for the faith our Lord speaks of: the acquiescence, not only of the mind, but of all one's powers.

Our Lord meant: 'He who sees the Son and believes in him, who is faithful in uniting himself to him by the assent of all his powers — this person God the Father wants to possess the eternal life his Son enjoys, which is given to all those united to him because such is the Father's will'.

Our Lord is the head and those who are united to him become his members. That is why he adds: 'And I will raise him up at the time determined in my Father's eternal decrees. The head being raised, the body must rise too. I will raise him up because resurrection of the body must come from the head, who has the vital principle in himself for his whole body, and, since all these have become my body by their faith, it is for me as their head to raise them'.

We must attend to the words, 'he who believes in the Son', which mean clinging with all the powers of the soul and not merely having faith in his words and doctrine. This attachment of all the powers of the soul to the Son adds hope and charity to faith. This brings about the true union of the soul with our Lord and through him with his Father.

By that last-mentioned will of his Father about those who will be saved, our Lord indicates that it is his Father's will to save us

by faith in his Son, the faith by which we truly have eternal life. But let us not be misled by the false idea weak souls might draw from these words of the divine Master, namely, that once we have seen the Son of God and have faith then we may do whatever we please, that we are living in eternal life in spite of following all the inclinations and evil desires of the earth. Neither should we yield to another similar illusion: that we only need faith in order to have life; that we have no need to be watchful over ourselves, or resist temptation; that it is enough to preserve that interior view of faith in our Lord without bothering much about the evil in our senses and flesh, saying to ourselves: we do not have to be so watchful about that, we only have to take care of the faith in the depths of our heart.

Similarly we must be on our guard against another even more crass illusion, namely, that it is enough to have that faith once; we then have life eternal and afterwards no longer have to bother about it. That sort of thinking is the result of being blinded by temptation of the devil and is a coarse sort of error.

Our Lord says that, according to his Father's will, faith in him will obtain eternal life, because all life is in him. Hence whoever is united to him by faith receives the gift in virtue of this union. Faith must perdure: a canal connected to a great and abundant reservoir of living water will be full, but disconnect it from the source and it will no longer contain anything. All life is in our Lord. If those who come to him once withdraw, communication ceases and there will be no more life.

Moreover, our Lord speaks about attachment not to his words but to himself. It must be so intense as to enable us to 'enter' into him, incorporating us, being 'for the Son'. This is done through all the powers of our soul; and it is through them he imparts his life to us, as the head imparts life to the members. Now it is impossible to imagine this faith alongside a worldly life with its earthly pleasures, giving free rein to natural inclinations, for that would mean to unite two things wholly incompatible. Moreover the life we receive from our Lord and the death brought about by

the spirit of the flesh and world cannot co-exist. We must therefore be on our guard if we wish to preserve the divine life of the Son of God by pure faith, and banish the world from our soul and resist all its allurements.

Furthermore, if our soul has this faith, it has our Lord's life within it, which means it has all the attractions, conflicts and repugnances of our Lord himself; otherwise it could not really have that life. The soul must have the greatest horror of sin and of everything akin to sin, for sin is the only thing our Lord hates. And if the soul truly has this horror of sin, it must necessarily have the greatest repugnance for what savours of it. Hence we must constantly reject sin, be constantly watchful to avoid it. Now evil and sin are never closer and more present to us than when they are in our senses. So those who do not mind sin and evil in their senses, or treat them lightly, have very little of our Lord's life and little or no faith.

It is true that the most powerful means to overcome temptation and resist the lusts of the flesh, the world and the devil is to fortify ourselves in this faith and the perfect union it contains, and fervently to revive and increase our Lord's life, which this faith gives. But in addition we must resist and stay on guard. Since the means we use is a means of resistance, we cannot afford to neglect it.

41. *Murmurabant ergo Judaei de illo quia dixisset: Ego sum panis vivus, qui de caelo descendi.*

41. *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."*

42. *Et dicebant: Nonne hic est Jesus filius Joseph, cujus nos novimus patrem et matrem? Quomodo ergo dicit hic: Quia de caelo descendi.*

42. *They said "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'? "*

The Jews grumbled among themselves the whole time our Lord was talking, and probably continued afterwards. Their

---

complaint was about 'I am the living bread which descended from heaven'. They judged everything according to the senses and that is why they grumbled. We surely know his father and mother; how then can he say that he descended from heaven? And yet they knew he had just worked a miracle to prove his mission, on which occasion he was speaking. It seems they should at least have asked with docility for an explanation so that their faith might be enlightened, if they had any; instead they murmured discontentedly. These grumblings came from sharing their opinions. Some said it was not true, since they knew his father and mother. Others said he had worked great miracles and if he were an impostor he could not. But all felt uncertain. They were unable to agree among themselves, and not one of them agreed with our Lord.

43. *Respondit ergo Jesus, et dixit  
eis: Nolite murmurare in invicem.*

43. *Jesus answered them, "Do not  
murmur among yourselves.*

Our Lord seeing them so disturbed by their murmurings among themselves and their disputations, said: 'Do not murmur against each other. You hear the others blaspheme against me; do not give in to anger, you are not much better informed than they'. Quarrels about salvation are not to our divine Master's taste; such disputes never produce good effects. Anger, or at least displeasure, is aroused; there is trouble all around because some do not want to believe and some blaspheme. All this produces nothing and shows ignorance. Emotional outbursts, disturbance, opposition cannot change dispositions of soul. Only grace can give faith: do not grumble about each other.

44. *Nemo potest venire ad me, nisi  
Pater, qui misit me, traxerit eum; et  
ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo  
die.*

44. *No one can come to me  
unless the Father who sent me  
draws him; and I will raise  
him up at the last day.*



If these persons speak against me, it must not surprise you, for no one can come to me unless my Father draws him. To understand these divine words we must realise that the eternal, merciful predestination by the Father is not only a general decree choosing someone created by him for eternal life. It consists also in special graces to be granted according to time, place and circumstances. Moreover the Father's mercy extends not only to the elect but even to those who will not be chosen. God's mercy has several degrees. It consists in giving special and momentary graces, which people lose by their own fault and to some extent abuse. These graces are more or less great according to the manner and degree with which the Father's adorable mercy is applied. To some are given special external graces of being able to come to our Lord; they were given to almost all the Jews, who abused them terribly. To others are given special interior graces — sometimes together with external ones — as were given to very many of these Jews; some received only interior graces. These interior graces are lights given to the mind accompanied ordinarily by an impulse to the will. Such graces were given to the Jews who saw our Lord when he spoke to them. These more perfect graces have a further power to touch and attract souls to the light, an attraction given even to those who do not follow it.

It is clear that the Jews experienced this grace of attraction, affecting the will. We see that something was inclining them towards our Lord. These interior graces differ in degrees of strength according to the Father's mercy.

Another degree of the Father's divine mercy is in perseverance. Souls faithful to the graces received experience them in a continually increasing way. But in almost all souls which are more or less faithful, divine mercy — in diverse degrees — grants more or less continuity and increase of grace, in accord with the soul's fidelity and the greatness of the divine mercy. These graces are often refused to those who abuse them, even if they do so through weakness and ordinary corruption. But on the contrary

they are often powerfully increased, according to the varying degrees of divine mercy, granted to an unfaithful soul.

It seems, however, that the abuse of grace that has its origin in malice and seems to be the sin against the Holy Spirit is always punished by a withdrawal of grace, and hence is never pardoned in this life or in the next. But this withdrawal of grace is still more or less according to the degree of divine mercy towards the soul that abuses graces. And so it sometimes happens, because of the withdrawal, that there is a hardening of the heart and eternal loss. Sometimes the soul will be saved. There is, nevertheless, the word of our Lord: 'this sin will not be pardoned in this life, where it will be punished by a diminution of any kind of grace'. From this follows a decrease of any kind of perfection. Nor will it be pardoned in the next life, where the soul will be punished by a lessening of glory. This will correspond to the degree of grace and perfection the soul failed to acquire in this world because of its malice.

Besides all that, we must remember that we have fallen into such extremes of corruption and evil by our sin that by themselves our souls are unable to tend Godwards; our mind cannot conceive divine things or what could save us and our will is unable to love him. Then God has to raise us from our extreme nothingness and incapacity in order that we may have life. He has to give us light to discern and after that he draws us to follow the light without which we could not reach him.

Our Lord has been given to us by the Father as the only way that leads to him and the only source of life for our soul. But we are so wretched and abominable that we cannot even reach our Lord. This too is on account of our sin and malice, which entirely darken our minds and prevent them from seeing and knowing him, which turn us away from him, and constantly draw our wills elsewhere, towards creatures and sin.

After he has given us this grace of seeing his Son, God has to add the grace of drawing and enticing us towards him. Moreover, even when we live in our Lord, he has to give us his grace

---

constantly to make us persevere, because our sin constantly turns us away from him and our soul is always inclined to follow the sinful tendencies of the flesh.

The grace needed to give that impulse and strength to our will, so that it can resist its evil inclinations and malice, varies according to the degree of malice, the strength of evil inclinations and the habit of evil found in the soul. The graces granted to Judas might perhaps have been sufficient to sanctify ten other persons whose malice and natural evil inclinations were ordinary and upon whom the devil had less influence. This goes to show how greatly our salvation depends on the divine mercy and our loss on our own malice.

Now to return to our Lord's words — He said to the Jews: 'Do not upset one another, do not be surprised at all this unbelief. Even one who is most convinced of my mission cannot come to me relying on his own powers ("no one"). My Father must touch his will by grace if he is to be drawn to me. It is my Father who sent me to save the whole world ("the Father who sent me"). He sent me to impart life. That is why he also necessarily assigned graces for the various plans he had in mind (in sending me) for each of his creatures. All those who were to come to me he destined for a grace of attraction; otherwise they could not come'. And so the attraction of the Father is related to his Son's mission and to the merciful designs he has towards each soul in that divine mission. According to the extent of divine mercy towards a soul, this attraction will be more or less strong, so as to counterbalance the malice and other effects of sin, in order to gain the soul's consent.

It is always true to say that evil is due to people's malice and all the good comes from grace and divine mercy working through the will's consent! This then is what our Lord means: 'It is not enough by the grace of God to see me. An attraction of the will is also needed, which is given to people to counterbalance adequately the malice and sin found in them, so that they may receive grace and consent to it'. For (at least it seems to me) our Lord did not mean that the Father had absolutely refused the

grace of attraction to the Jews. But here he desires to speak of an attraction that is truly received by souls and followed by decision, as he explains in the next verse. And if he says absolutely 'unless the Father draws', without qualification, it is because he desires to point out that all the good in those who come to him comes from this attraction.

'Do not be surprised that they are not coming to me; no one can come without that grace of attraction, which does everything to draw the will and give the power to come to me'. And he adds: 'And it is I who raise them up' — in the sense of the words in the preceding verse — 'because they belong to my body by the very fact that they are attracted by my Father and are in me, provided they are in that state when entering eternity'. (That, after all, is always the essential condition.)

45. *Est scriptum in prophetis:  
Et erunt omnes docibiles Dei.  
Omnis qui audivit a Patre,  
et didicit, venit ad me.*

45. *It is written in the prophets, 'And  
they shall all be taught by God'.  
Every one who has heard and  
learned from the Father comes to  
me.*

It is written in the prophet that when the consolation of Israel would appear in the midst of the people of God all the children of Israel would be taught by God, or at least could be 'taught' by God if they wished. All would hear the voice of God speaking to them and desiring to touch them more or less. And our Lord adds: 'those who have heard my Father's voice speaking to them and desiring to touch them and who on hearing have really learnt, these have been instructed and a real spiritual impetus given to their souls'. The expression 'to hear' shows that the Father imparts this grace, for it means that the ear is struck by the word the Father utters. When we merely hear, there is only the action of the one speaking; his words come to strike our ears. Hence when 'I hear' it means that someone has spoken to me. When our Lord says: 'who heard the Father', it does not mean so much that the person's



ear has been struck as that the Father has spoken to him and made his voice heard.

The words 'to learn' mean one decides to receive the word and relish it. 'Comes to me': these persons come to me. By the words 'he has learnt' our Lord explains the will's decision to follow the Father's attraction. He calls that 'to hear' and 'to learn', because the grace of seeing always comes first; after that comes the grace of attracting the will to choose what the intellect sees.

46. *Non quia Patrem vidit quisquam,  
nisi is qui est a Deo, hic  
vidit Patrem.*

46. *Not that any one has seen the  
Father except him who is from  
God; he has seen the Father.*

Our Lord adds: 'If I say that the Father attracts, this does not mean that someone is in direct contact with the Father to receive some grace immediately from him'. 'No one sees the Father' means no one is in direct relation with the Father except the Son, who came out from the Father. The graces given by the Father, that attraction therefore, are received through the Son himself. It is through the Son that the Father draws all those destined for the Son. It is the Father who by his eternal will gives the grace of attraction and it is the Incarnate Son who in fact attracts the person by reason of that same decision. That is why our Lord says elsewhere: 'When I am lifted up I shall draw all things to myself' (Jn 12:52). It is, therefore, the Son who draws and not the Father. The Father draws by means of his Son; the Father gives the orders, and the Son, through the merits of his passion, imparts this grace to us.

47. *Amen, amen dico vobis: Qui  
credit in me, habet vitam  
aeternam.*

47. *Truly, truly, I say to you, he  
who believes has eternal life.*

In the preceding verses our Lord answered those who murmured against the murmurers. Here he speaks to the murmurers themselves, 'You murmur because I say I am the

bread that came down from heaven to give life, but in truth I tell you that he who believes in me has eternal life'. Pay attention to this: he who rejects me rejects eternal life. And after thus showing that he is the bread of life — through the faith of those who believe in him — he passes from this eating in pure faith to another more real eating, more like ordinary eating. He repeats the terms he used in verse 35, when first developing his teaching about eating in faith, wishing to answer the objection brought up by the Jews about the manna. Now he expounds on a new grace and the effects it produces in our souls, namely, the eucharistic eating.

48. *Ego sum panis vitae.*

48. *I am the bread of life.*

'I am the bread of life. He who believes in me,' says our Lord, 'has eternal life. I am the bread of life. The whole life of the world is in me, as in a food. He who does not take food cannot live, so he who does not come to me has not life. He must be nourished by me, so as to receive the life which is in me.'

49. *Patres vestri manducaverunt  
manna in deserto, et mortui sunt.*

49. *Your fathers ate the manna  
in the wilderness, and they died.*

50. *Hic est panis de caelo  
descendens: ut si quis ex ipso  
manducaverit, non moriatur.*

50. *This is the bread which comes  
down from heaven, that a man  
may eat of it and not die.*

There is still a question of eating in faith, because our Lord in verse 50 says 'of it'. But in the eucharist we receive 'him wholly and entirely'. Receiving him in faith is not a total participation; some receive more, others less, according to the Father's divine will. Therefore the term 'of it' is used perfectly to designate reception in faith, but it would be inexact for the Blessed Eucharist; as with the manna, no one receives or eats more than another.

Another reason is that in the eating of faith what is received is not our Lord himself. He dwells in us by faith as the head dwells

in his members, and he imparts his life and Spirit in this union by the graces which come from him and enter into our souls to nourish them. This is the food that comes from our Lord through faith, and the term 'of it' suits it perfectly. In the Eucharist, on the contrary, the object of eating is our Lord himself, author of all grace and perfecter of our whole life and holiness.

In verse 32 our Lord tells the Jews that the manna was not true bread from heaven, but that he himself is the true bread from heaven; throughout all the rest of the discourse he explains how he is the bread of life come down from heaven. In these two verses he places himself in parallel with the manna, to show most clearly that the manna was not the true bread from heaven, but that he was. That is why in verse 48 he repeats: 'I am the bread of life; it is I who am that bread of life and not the manna'. And in verse 49 he explains it thus: 'Your fathers ate manna in the desert; nevertheless they died; therefore the manna is a food like other foods and not the bread of life, that is, the bread of heaven, the bread which gives eternal life. But the bread which the Father gives you now is bread that has descended from heaven. In heaven it is by this bread that all live, because it has life in itself and it has come down from heaven so that if anyone eats of it he may no longer die. If there are those who have eaten and yet die, it is because they have not kept it in their souls, they rejected it; if they preserve it they will no longer die'.

51. *Ego sum panis vivus, qui de  
caelo descendi.*

51. *I am the living bread which came  
down from heaven;*

52. *Si quis manducaverit ex  
hoc pane, vivet in aeternum;  
et panis quem ego dabo,  
caro mea pro est mundi vita.*

52. *if any one eats of this bread,  
he will live forever; and the bread  
which I shall give for the life of  
the world is my flesh."*

'Not only am I the bread that gives life, as is expressed by the term "bread of life", but I am a living bread. I am not like your

material bread that nourishes the body, which is a dead bread, but I am a living bread. In myself I possess the essence of the life I impart and I live myself by the life I impart. This life, which I have in myself, I have in heaven in the bosom of my Father from all eternity. I have it in me and I give it to all the angels, and I have descended from heaven to impart it to earth as to heaven'. Here our Lord begins to pass from the eating of faith to the eucharistic eating. 'I am the living bread who possesses life in myself in a living way. My essence is life; that is why those who eat of this bread by faith have eternal life. But I have to give this bread in a more substantial and nourishing manner than eating by faith, and that bread is my very flesh'.

Those who eat through faith partake of the bread of life, but not of the living bread. For in eating by faith, our Lord does not personally dwell in us, to be our nourishment, but he resides through his Holy Spirit, who unites us to him and imparts life to us. It is nevertheless the bread of heaven and of life, because in this food we have the same life of heaven, the same substance that comes from the same source. But for the elect in heaven this bread is a living bread because they possess it in themselves, living and imparting life as we have it in the Blessed Eucharist. It is the author of essential life who comes personally into us, to become a living bread in us. We can see that there is an immense difference between the union with our Lord in faith with all the powers of our soul, by which we receive life from him and, on the other hand, the eucharistic union where, besides union in faith, there is the personal and substantial union of the Incarnate Word in our soul, in which our Lord lives and where he substantially communicates his life. There, then, is the difference between the 'bread of life' and the 'living bread'. In heaven the elect have the living bread in them in a perfect way. On earth we have it also in the Blessed Eucharist in the same way, according as the aptitude of our sinful flesh to receive it allows.

That is why our Lord says: 'the bread which I shall give'. The Father has given the bread of life to all of us. This means that he



has given it to the earth, that he may give life to the world. But here our Lord gives the bread to everyone who receives him in the Eucharist, to be the life of the world, not to *give* but to *be* the life of the world: 'for the life of the world'. And the bread which he gives is his flesh which each one must eat; when possessing this adorable flesh, we possess the whole Jesus Christ, the author and source of life, life itself.

But why does our Lord say that he gives his flesh for the life of the world? And why does he give his flesh as eucharistic bread? We can suggest three reasons: the first is that our divine Master wished to make of this adorable sacrament a sacrifice of peace-making by which he wished to unite the creature perfectly to the Creator, while at the same time desiring to attain the diverse ends of a true sacrifice. It is the same Victim which is offered to the Father for the life of the world and eaten by creatures so as to unite them to the Father and share his life.

As a sacrifice, it had to be flesh, to constitute a genuine sacrifice. And as a sacrifice of peace-making must make people partake of God's table, to unite them perfectly with him and impart to them his peace and life, people must eat the victim which is God's own bread in such a way that the victim is at the same time in God so that on the one hand people may obtain grace and mercy and on the other hand render to God what they owe him. These duties are all included in the act of sacrifice, for sacrifice includes all the duties of religion of the creature towards the Creator.

In order to grasp how perfectly our Lord fulfils the obligations we have to the Father in the eucharistic sacrifice, and to understand why the sacrifice had to be in his flesh, we must realise that the eucharistic sacrifice is identical with the sacrifice of the Cross. This is a perfect sacrifice worked out in his flesh. It fulfils all the requirements and achieves all the goals of the most perfect sacrifice.

And so, on the one hand, by the sacrifice of the Blessed Eucharist our Lord transports us into the bosom of his Father and

we render to the Father all we owe him, through his beloved Son. In that way the divine victim is in God for us for the purposes we have described above. At the same time, this victim, which is thus in God for us is also for God in us, to make us share in God's life and impart the blessings he has obtained from God, and this is why the wonderful sacrifice is consummated by being eaten. We understand easily that the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist had to contain our Lord's flesh, for in it our Lord is the victim to be sacrificed; and this is accomplished directly in his flesh. Moreover, the Eucharist being the sacrifice of Calvary, the flesh had to be present, for the flesh was also immolated on Calvary. And this flesh had to be given to eat, because the consummation of the sacrifice had to take place in this way. Our Lord says: 'the bread that I give, I give for the life of the world, in the sacrifice which I shall offer ceaselessly to obtain life for the world and to impart life, to become life in those who receive me, and the bread which I shall offer for the life of the world is my flesh'.

The sacrifice of the Blessed Eucharist is so perfect that all the sacrifices of the Old Testament were called for to prefigure it. The sacrifice offered for sin was perfectly accomplished by our Lord in the sacrifice of the cross, and therefore in the eucharistic sacrifice, for by this sole sacrifice all the sins of the whole world are remitted.

The sacrifice of holocaust represented the duties of a creature towards the Creator, by its destruction. It was accomplished on the cross and in the Blessed Eucharist. And the sacrifice of peace-making in which only one part was offered at the altar and another was eaten by the priest and still another by the one who offered it, is also found here. But in the Blessed Eucharist it is much more perfect; the whole victim is offered and consumed in God, the same is entirely eaten by the priest, and the same is entirely eaten by the people. This renders this peaceful union much more perfect. In the old law it could not be done that way; it was symbolised by portions of the victim which represented the whole.

Here is the second reason. Our most beloved and loving Lord Jesus, in his incomprehensible love for us sinners and criminals,

desired to unite himself to us in a most perfect way to impart his own wonderful, incomprehensible holiness. For this purpose he instituted this adorable sacrament, the sacrament *par excellence* of his love. Moved by this immense love, of which no creature, even for all eternity, can thoroughly fathom the depth, he desired to make us share in a most perfect way in all the divine, ineffable activities of the Word in his sacred humanity, carried out for our salvation and sanctification. So he desired to give us this most lovable and adorable humanity as substantial food in order to incorporate it most wonderfully into us. By this he wants to make it one with us, so that all the holy actions carried out by the Word on our behalf might thereby take place in us, according to our receptivity and dispositions.

All these divine operations flowing from his holiness were realised in the different mysteries which the Son of God accomplished on earth. Now all these mysteries were realised in our Lord's flesh; hence he gives us his flesh in the Blessed Eucharist. And to that flesh are united his soul and the divinity of the Word, that we may receive through this perfect union in our own flesh and soul all the heavenly operations of the Word in all its mysteries for our greater holiness.

Our Lord's mercy and incomprehensible love are shown more clearly in this adorable sacrament in that he gives us at the same time all the fruits of all the mysteries which he lived in order to sanctify us, and he gives them in a most perfect way. For our Lord is perfect in the Blessed Eucharist because, having passed through all his mysteries, he is now seated at his Father's right hand. And so we receive all the graces contained in the Incarnation, the Nativity, the hidden life, the public life, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and in the eternal glorification of our adorable head. All these mysteries were realised in his sacred flesh. That is why he gives us this flesh, that these fruits may flow as from their source into our souls, as well as the fruits of all the other mysteries and actions. All of these are abundant treasures of adoration and of duties fulfilled towards his Father and of graces, blessings and holiness of life for us.

He instituted the act of eating as a sacramental action which must produce and signify the wonderful effects of this adorable sacrament, because nourishment represents the union, identity and perfect transformation which is brought about in this sacrament between us and the Son of God by his flesh. This is why our Lord says: 'The bread which I give is for the life of the world'. Not only does it deliver the world from sin but it gives the world the life contained in the divine mysteries. As if to say: 'For this do I give my flesh, in which all the mysteries without exception have been accomplished'.

The third reason our Lord has given us this great sacrament is not only to effect in our souls all the graces of his mysteries and establish the perfection of his life but also to sow in our flesh a seed of resurrection. He gives us a sure pledge of this by associating us with his risen flesh. That is why this sacrament is particularly the sacrament of his flesh.

Moreover, he does something else which is beneficial, even for all. He weakens the concupiscence of the flesh and the effect of sin; he strengthens our soul against our perverted, evil flesh. From his pure and holy flesh, identified with ours, which is corrupt and sinful, there comes a power to deaden all the effects of sin residing there. This then is the reason our Lord gives us his flesh to eat, to give life to the world — a twofold life: life in the soul and life in the body. And the latter is itself twofold: life which is a seed of our future resurrection, and life which is opposed to the death that dwells in our flesh and is destroyed by this divine life.

53. *Litigabant ergo Judaei ad invicem dicentes: Quomodo potest hic nobis carnem suam dare ad manducandum?*

53. *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*

When a soul begins to be unfaithful to grace, and that through malice, the evil condition constantly worsens. At first the Jews murmured but did not dare lose their temper; now they were arguing and fighting and it was getting serious. We now see greater



malice. Our Lord had told them many things which they failed to understand. They naturally could and should have said to themselves: 'Here are things we cannot understand, like many other things which are obscure.' Instead they immediately protested when he spoke about this new food.

As our Lord went on, his words became ever clearer and finally there could be no more doubt about what he meant. However, his first words could certainly seem obscure for people who often misunderstood divine instructions and who, besides, were not clear about this new food. But now they were displeased and were glad to find something to object to in what our Lord was saying in this holy discourse. Having grasped the words, which expressed something clear about an object that seemed to them obscure and even unbearable, they shouted out, squabbling among themselves: 'how can this man give us his flesh to eat?' They failed to understand, not knowing the all-powerful love of our Saviour for his own. And this is precisely what our Lord develops in the rest of the discourse.

They imagined that it was an unhallowed ordinary eating, for they did not recognise the finger of God and its activity in the divine sacraments, and especially in the sacrament of his incomprehensible Love.

54. *Dixit ergo eis Jesus: Amen,  
amen dico vobis, Nisi manducaveritis  
carnem Filii hominis, et biberitis  
ejus sanguinem, non  
habebitis vitam in vobis.*

54. *So Jesus said to them,  
"Truly, truly, I say to you,  
unless you eat the flesh of  
the Son of man and drink  
his blood, you have no life  
in you;*

55. *Qui manducat meam carnem et  
bibit meum sanguinem, habet vitam  
aeternam; et ego resuscitabo eum in  
novissimo die.*

55. *he who eats my flesh and  
drinks my blood has eternal  
life, and I will raise him up at  
the last day.*

56. *Caro mea vere est cibus, et  
sanguis meus vere est potus.*

56. *For my flesh is food indeed  
and my blood is drink indeed.*

If they had faith and asked for an explanation with proper dispositions, our Lord would certainly have told them; but they were badly disposed, so he merely explained the wonderful effects of this food. He only emphasised more and more the certainty of what he had promised, so that there could no longer remain any doubt in their minds about the meaning of the eating and of the flesh that would be eaten. He did not explain how it would come about, whether sacramentally or in a natural way. Our Lord demands faith first, and once faith is present he enlightens the soul regarding the object of its faith. He had done enough to manifest his divine mission to make these wicked Jews believe his divine words. How blessed they would have been had they yielded to the solicitations of divine grace; they would soon have seen things clearly. Our Lord said: 'You clamour, you murmur, you argue and fight and refuse to believe; you resist the divine word. I tell you nevertheless in all truth: if as a result of this ill-will and lack of faith you despise this food, and for as long as you are scandalised and refuse to partake of the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, you will not have life in you'.

That this is what our Lord meant is clear from his earlier words about faith: he who has it has life. Therefore it is not absolutely essential to eat the Blessed Eucharist. Moreover in saying these things he was speaking directly to the Jews. He was speaking about their obstinacy in not believing, in refusing to approach the adorable sacrament ('unless you eat', but not 'unless someone eat'); whereas in the following verse he says: 'the one who eats', without addressing this to the Jews to whom he was speaking; he says it in general, to all. 'But if someone less incredulous and less malicious than you approaches and eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of man with faith (and no doubt the proper dispositions), such a one has eternal life'. That person already had life through faith; it was sufficiently perfect before he or she partook of the food; and, in that case, the eating increases and perfects eternal life. Moreover we can say that this

life is really given entirely, because when eating this food we receive the author and source of life. And so the whole life that we acquire by faith and the different sacraments is totally contained, *par excellence*, in the Blessed Eucharist.

‘And I will raise him up’. Our Lord shows that in the sacred flesh we eat we shall find the germ of our own resurrection: he is the Word, the Son of God, who will raise us up by granting us the grace of resurrection of his own flesh.

We could say also that life eternal here means only the life of heaven. Our Lord says that in the Blessed Eucharist he gives us a very particular strength to persevere, and thus the Blessed Eucharist brings about eternal life directly. And he adds: ‘I will raise him up’. ‘Besides the life of the blessed, which you will enjoy immediately on entering into holy eternity, I will also restore your body to you later, in virtue of the same grace contained in my flesh that you eat, in order that it may share in the same eternal life’.

After this our Lord proclaimed to the Jews, who were incredulous and rebellious against his divine mystery, that, if they refused to eat this food and drink this mysterious drink through their unbelief and antagonism, they would not have life, while, on the contrary, those who eat this bread with faith will have life. And to convince them he added that this was not a parable he was telling them; his flesh was truly food and his blood was truly drink. He truly gives food and drink, and so we must take them as they are. It is not spiritual bread or food, which the soul must take without the body’s participation, like the food he spoke of in the first part of the discourse, when speaking of those who would come to him by faith. But this is bread, that is, real food; his body is truly eaten and his blood truly drunk.

57. *Qui manducat meam carnem, et  
bibit meum sanguinem, in me  
manet et ego in eo.*

57. *He who eats my flesh and  
drinks my blood abides in me, and  
I in him.*

Our Lord had just spoken about the life he gives to those who truly eat his body and truly drink his blood. In this verse and the

following he shows the perfection of this life. The perfection of a soul consists in having our Lord's life, and the more perfect this life is the greater the holiness. This life has several degrees. Its perfection consists in the transformation of the soul into our Lord, which is the most perfect union we can attain with him in this world, while, however, keeping the use and freedom of our faculties.

We are not speaking here of some extraordinary graces our Lord is pleased to grant to privileged souls. It means a permanent state of soul, which our Lord wants to establish and maintain in all those who approach him and eat his flesh and drink his blood with the required preliminary dispositions, given that he can accomplish in and through this sacrament, to the fullness of his desires, what he intended when instituting it. It is about this transformation he speaks here, if we take this verse in its deepest meaning.

The transformation consists in two things. First, our soul is, as it were, surrounded and enclosed spiritually by our Lord; every creature is so fully forgotten that no thought about any creature now enters the mind; the soul is no longer occupied with creatures. The mind sees and the heart loves our Lord alone. All its tastes, outlook, desires, affections, are in our Lord. In that condition the soul has all its powers so completely in our Lord that in all its interior and exterior actions it remains always absorbed in him, has no other tendency, no other attention or consideration, no other satisfaction, affection or desire, than in our Lord and through our Lord, in whom the soul has its whole repose and its whole existence.

This is the first direct and immediate effect which our divine Master produces in the eucharistic union: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me'. By this sacrament he draws the soul into himself and holds it there. Note the words, 'abides in me'. For this transformation to be real and perfect, it is not enough that the soul be in our Lord in the sense that it contain, in an active, living way, our Lord's life, movement, existence and



being. Our Lord has also to be in it. Put lead into a golden vase; the lead remains lead, it is merely in a precious vase now. Similarly our soul would have remained the same if we were merely in Jesus Christ. Our actions would have been precious, not of themselves but because they were in the precious vase. Now put pure gold into a leaden vase; the vase remains lead; in itself it has no great value. This tells us what the life of Jesus would have been in us. But melt the lead and mingle it so perfectly with the gold that every particle of lead has an admixture of gold; then this makes the lead quite different from what it was alone. It partakes, as much as that is possible, of the beauty and value of gold. From being a valueless and dirty vessel, it has become a glorious vase fit to adorn the king's table. This is an image of what happens through the union of our Lord with our souls in his adorable sacrament. He is in us and we in him, and by this wonderful fusion we are identified with him in the most perfect way possible for sinful creatures on earth.

Our Lord's existence in us is a living and life-giving existence, because he is bread of life and living bread. He fills all the powers of our souls incomparably more than sea water fills a sponge plunged into it. He is principle and soul of our life and works. He bounteously gives us all that he is, all his perfections, all his pure holy tendencies, all his love for his Father, all his hatred of what is contrary to that love. And he establishes his life in us in all the states and mysteries he passed through and now lives in the eternal bosom of his Father. He thus becomes the principle, source, moderator and director of all the movements of our soul in all our works, and the soul and life of these same works; so that everything in us is no longer ourselves but Jesus Christ who dwells in us.

Blessed is the faithful soul who is well disposed for such great things. It surrenders unreservedly into the hands of its adorable Master, and is docile to all the impressions and promptings he desires to give by coming substantially into it in the adorable sacrament of his love.

Note that he says 'remains', which indicates not a fleeting moment, but a condition of life. He desires to work in us and produce great wonders of holiness, not for a moment, as happens for certain souls absorbed in our Lord immediately after holy communion, who then return to their ordinary state of life, giving in once more to a life that is partly natural and imperfect. The divine Saviour wants us to persevere in this union. He does not ask that our mind be always absorbed in him in a felt way — this is not the essence of that transfusion of our soul into our divine love who comes to dwell in us — but a real persevering union must remain. This is exceedingly rare in the Church. Few people draw all the fruit possible from holy communion, but each draws according to his or her dispositions. Here our Lord speaks of the whole extent of his mercy in this adorable sacrament of his love.

58. *Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem; et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me.*

58. *As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.*

Our adorable Master explains this eucharistic union further and its wonderful effects. He elaborates on the greatness, the riches and the glory that are ours through it: 'As my Father has sent me, that is, has united me to my humanity through the union of my Incarnation, and lives continually in me both in my humanity and divinity, and, since I live solely for my Father, everything in my humanity as well as in my divinity ends by relating to my Father. Although it is not the Father who became incarnate, but the Son, nevertheless everything in my humanity — which has received him into itself — lives solely for the Father and always tends towards the Father. This is because in the Son human nature has received the whole life of the Father. Living in his Son, he has engendered this life within his humanity'.

'So he who eats me will live because of me'. Their whole life and all their activity will terminate in me, as a result of the perfect

union which I bring about in them by this eating and the life they receive thereby. For, although they eat only my flesh, and receive directly and immediately only my flesh for their nourishment, the perfect union between myself and my flesh means my life is perfectly and wholly contained in my flesh. On that account they receive my life and therefore will live for me, just as my humanity lives for the Father. This humanity lives for my Father because it has my Father's life within it. This is the same life as that of the Word, which belongs to him and ceaselessly tends towards him. Likewise those who eat the flesh of the Son of God live for the Son of God, because they have the life of the Son of God which is in the sacred humanity that he possesses. In everything his humanity is linked with the (divine) Word'.

The truths contained in these divine words are great and glorious for the children of God who have the happiness of eating the flesh and drinking the adorable blood of the Son of God.

Firstly, our Lord says that he is in us in a living and life-giving way, and that therein we have the life of the Word, for he uses as a term of comparison the phrase 'the living Father'. Just as the living Father has given him this mission, which is thereby a living and vivifying mission, so the mission of the sacred humanity which comes into us through the power of the Word is also living and life-giving.

Secondly, he likens the life which he has in us to the life of his Father in him: 'as the living Father sent me', and he likens his sacramental union with our souls to the union of the Word with his own human nature. He connects by comparison the mission of the Word with our eating (the heavenly bread), 'as the living Father sent me' and 'he who eats me'. This shows the perfect union that exists between our adorable Lord and our poor souls. He clearly gives us to understand sufficiently that he makes us share completely in the great mystery of his Incarnation. And here is something even more excellent: our Lord comes into us after accomplishing in his person all the mysteries of sanctification. He makes us share in all these mysteries, in all the graces and holiness

they contain, in the same degree of perfection as the union and sharing of his Incarnation, that is, in the union of his sacred humanity with his divinity.

Moreover, our life in relation to him is similar to his life in relation to his Father: 'As I live by the Father, he also will live by me'. Who can understand the perfection and beauty of Jesus' life for his Father? Well, he wants to establish this whole life, so rich, magnificent and glorious in us for himself and through him for his Father; for it is there everything ends. What incomprehensible mercy! What love! What gentleness! What joy he finds in sinful creatures! Let us then prove and prepare ourselves well for the many graces and great holiness Jesus desires to establish in us.

Thirdly, Jesus shows us that the life we must lead for him alone is not something coming from ourselves, but coming precisely from the fact that he is our life. The principle and end must always be of the same nature, and the effects must resemble them. The purely natural earthly life, by which we mean our own inclinations, is the principle of human living; this principle can only lead to the self, to the satisfaction of our inclinations and urges, whose effects will be purely natural actions or deeds of the flesh. All the more so then, or rather it is above all comparison, if God is the principle of our life, if God's life is the life of our life and the soul of every movement in us, how much more our life ought to tend only towards him and how much more will all the effects springing from this divine principle be divine effects of love and holiness containing all perfection.

59. *Hic est panis qui de caelo descendit. Non sicut manducaverunt patres vestri manna et mortui sunt; qui manducat hunc panem, vivet in aeternum.*

59. *This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."*

60. *Haec dixit in synagoga docens, in Capharnaum.*

60. *This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.*



Our Lord, after showing the second reality signified by the manna, that it proclaimed the eucharistic bread in figure, summarised, as he did before verses, 48, 49, 50 to show the Jews that they were receiving more than their ancestors did in the manna. 'He shall live forever'. Those who ate the manna wished to preserve their bodily life. And if the manna had truly possessed a substantial life as heavenly bread should, the Jews of the desert would have been able to preserve that substantial life, to continue living until they entered the promised land. But the manna was only a figure; it did not really have life; it was not a true heavenly bread and so could not impart a life it had not.

But here you have a bread truly come down from heaven, bread that has life; and he who eats this bread has only to maintain the life he receives from it and he will have that life for all eternity. This depends on his will. If there are people who die nevertheless after eating it, it is because they have rejected the life which is in this bread, but it is not for want of life in the adorable bread. Note that our Lord says: 'he who eats this bread', and not 'from this bread', because it is impossible to eat it without doing so entirely. The Lord's body is whole in every particle.

### *Peter's Profession of Faith*

61. *Multi ergo audientes ex discipulis  
ejus, dixerunt: Durus est hic sermo,  
et quis potest eum audire?*

61. *Many of his disciples, when  
they heard it, said, "This is a hard  
saying; who can listen to it?"*

Not all those who followed our Lord and were his disciples were equally disposed. Many did not follow him by a true effect of grace, but partly by self-interest, because they thought he would soon appear in glory, according to their false ideas about the Messiah, at which time great glory and benefits would be theirs as his disciples. Moreover, they had seen him perform many miracles, and were proud of following this great prophet or Messiah and of being counted among his disciples.

They were also touched by the words of grace that fell from his lips, which no one can hear without experiencing a touch of grace. Grace was indeed influencing them somewhat, but nature was stronger and counteracted grace, so that as long as they experienced some satisfaction in hearing his words they continued to follow him. They did not have genuine faith, or else their faith was very weak; nor were they sustained by a strong faith which would have attached them unswervingly to our Lord. When his divine words did not produce a pleasing experience they murmured because of their lack of faith and hardness of heart and because they failed to understand his divine words.

This is what happened them on this occasion. Like the Jews, they believed that our Lord meant it was his living flesh he would give them to eat, or rather they did not understand how he could give it to eat; and their souls, devoid of faith and grace and full of self-love, rebelled immediately against so strange a thing. They did not ask for an explanation but yielded to displeasure expressed in grumbling, in contrast to the good souls who, full of faith, clinging to their Master and docile to his teaching, were led by grace to believe what they failed to understand. These were quite certain that all their Master said would come to pass, without knowing how. They were convinced that he had the power to fulfill what he promised. And his words, though beyond understanding, brought gentleness and calm to their souls, instead of the rigidity and hardness produced in the souls of others who were uncooperative and ill-disposed.

'This saying is hard', they said. O my God! It was not your word that was hard for, on the contrary, it is full of gentleness and love and it brings joy and consolation to those who love you. But these people were hard. They had an iron mind and a heart of marble to resist your lovable words. By doing so they became even more hardhearted, because your divine grace was less felt by them, due to this infidelity and hardness of mind and heart. They attributed the hardness to your divine words. Those poor blind people should have been more docile; then they would have found it sweeter than all the sweetness earth can give.

O Jesus, never let my mind and heart be hard and unfaithful. May they always be disposed to listen to you and receive with joy and love all your divine words, so that they may be the life of my soul!

'Who can listen to it?' Poor miserable individuals, they want to understand, otherwise they will not believe! This proves how feebly God's grace was working in them and how predominant their self-centered spirit. What came of it? The greatest misfortune! They finished up by abandoning the only source of living water.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 62. <i>Sciens autem Jesus apud semetipsum, quia murmurarent de hoc discipuli ejus, dixit eis: Hoc vos scandalizat?</i> | 62. <i>But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offence at this?"</i> |
| 63. <i>Si ergo videritis Filium hominis ascendentem ubi erat prius?</i>  | 63. <i>Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?</i>                                    |

These disciples had little faith and thus little knowledge of our Lord. Moreover, they judged everything he said according to their own interpretation and the impressions his words made on their senses. That is why they could not conceive how our Lord could give them his flesh to eat; their senses rebelled against it. Neither could they understand how this flesh, which he said was the bread he would give them to eat, could have come down from heaven. Besides the repugnance of their senses to being given our Lord's flesh to eat, they did not understand that he was sufficiently powerful to give them his flesh to eat. The Jews said: 'How can he give us his flesh to eat? How can he? By what power?'

Our Lord knew what they were thinking, and said: 'The things I tell you scandalise you, you leave me because you refuse to believe that this flesh will be given to you as bread that has come down from heaven? But what will you say when you see the Son of man ascending to the right hand of his Father to go back into his eternal bosom, from which the Word descended to unite himself

with this flesh and give it to you? Would you still think this flesh was not the bread that came down from heaven? It is certain, nevertheless, that it could not ascend without having descended through the Word of God, who is eternally in the Father's bosom in perfect union with him. Would you not see that this eating is not carnal, for the lower senses, as is the eating of the flesh of beasts? It is a glorious spiritual eating. Then you would see that the nature of my body will be wholly changed and will have other properties than a natural body, for in it everything will be glorious and divine. By this very fact, even without full comprehension, you would understand enough to know not to judge according to what the lower senses grasp about food. Neither would you doubt any more about my power when you beheld me endowed with my Father's power'.

64 *Spiritus est qui vivificat; caro non prodest quidquam; verba quae ego locutus sum vobis, spiritus et vita sunt.*

64. *It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

'You are people of flesh; you judge everything through your senses and believe possible only what is in line with your senses. Now realise that that is not the way to judge. It is the Holy Spirit who vivifies the soul. You must judge the divine things according to the graces and lights of this divine Spirit. All life comes from the Spirit, it is only this same Spirit who knows these things. Hence it is only in this divine Spirit and in his light that we must examine them. The senses cannot know or examine these things, for they neither know nor possess life. Since it is only the divine Spirit who can give life, it is only in him and through him that we can acquire it; the work of the senses is no help towards this. "It is the Spirit who vivifies". It is the Spirit who gives life, and it is in him you must examine and seek all that is spirit and life. "The flesh is of no avail." In this matter the flesh is neither good nor useful, that is, your human and carnal senses are valueless for



considering these things. It is not according to them that you will be able to understand and possess them.

'The words I have spoken, the things I have proclaimed to you that scandalise you, are spirit and life. They belong precisely to those divine things which should not be examined or conceived in any other way than in the Holy Spirit, by divine grace and not through the senses. And then, because they are graces of the Holy Spirit, they are spirit itself and they are made for penetrating into the depths of the soul in a supernatural and divine way. If they are received in the Holy Spirit they give life; they enter into the soul and vivify it because they are life. But if you examine them by purely carnal senses they cannot enter into the soul, because the flesh is incapable of that, "it is of no avail;" and instead of life the outcome is scandal'.

This is amply explained by St Paul: the Spirit wars against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:17). The soul, when it is unwilling to receive things except through the senses and flesh, necessarily resists, and the Spirit himself, instead of entering, clashes with it and rejects it. Blessed therefore are those who accept these words in the Spirit of grace and in true faith, they will receive life. Woe to those who always look at things according to the senses and flesh, who want to believe only what they feel; they will not have these words in themselves and consequently will not have life.

65. *Sed sunt quidam ex vobis qui non credunt. Sciebat enim ab initio Jesus qui essent non credentes, et quis traditurus esset eum.*

65. *But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were who did not believe, and who it was that should betray him.*

'But these words of life do not impress all of you for some of you do not believe and for this reason these words are not words of life for you'. The evangelist adds that Jesus knew who among the disciples did not believe, before they declared their unbelief and left; he even knew who was

going to betray him later on. Nevertheless, our divine Lord had the goodness to treat these unfaithful disciples with the same gentleness as the others, and the traitor with the same familiarity as his apostles.

66. *Et dicebat: propterea dixi vobis, [quia] nemo potest venire ad me, nisi fuerit ei datum a Patre meo.*

66. *And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."*

Our Lord continues to speak to his faithless disciples: 'I know there are some among you who do not believe. That is why I said "that no one can come to me except through my Father." It is not through human considerations, or the satisfaction and attraction of pleasure, or the calmness or gentleness produced by my words or the truths I proclaim, that people come to me'.

Such people do not really come to our Lord but to themselves, for it is themselves they seek when they approach the divine Saviour. Moreover, persons like that do not remain. Sooner or later they quit and re-enter the ordinary ways of perdition. This is still true today, and it is often possible to discern those who will not persevere, for quite often the bad disposition with which they come is evident.

This offers guidance to directors of souls, who sometimes pay too much attention to characters and natural dispositions and not enough to divine grace. Someone comes; they do not attend to the degree of grace they see, but to whether he or she is of the type to persevere. It is not nature that gives perseverance, but grace. Our divine Master, foreseeing those who will not persevere, does not say, those who have too fickle a character will not persevere, but, no one comes to me if my Father does not draw him. He makes everything depend on grace and wants to fix all our attention there. Strong characters sometimes seem to persevere, and do persevere in reality because they hold on to a thing they have once for all decided on; but it is not to our Lord they are going but to themselves, unless grace keeps them constant by the sweet chains of love and gentleness.

It is quite true that the more the malice of sin, which spoils everything, is in us, the greater is the grace we need; and those whose character is more opposed to what is good need greater grace. But we must not stop there. Directors have to be observant, for they cannot guide souls properly unless their principal attention is fixed upon the activity of grace. Their spiritual children must strongly combat vices and faults, certainly, but they should rather direct their attention and care to divine grace, in order to increase and strengthen it so that they may ardently desire and esteem it more than everything else, instead of fixing their attention almost exclusively on the combat against their vices, as if it were a question of a physical tussle. The struggle is between the Holy Spirit and the flesh; the travail of the soul will be more or less strong according to the struggle one observes between the Holy Spirit and the flesh, that is, in proportion to what grace has to counteract. When the Holy Spirit acts in the soul less labour is called for and better results are forthcoming. In any case, it must be shown that all power lies in grace, and not in the person, after the example of the great Master of souls.

67. *Ex hoc multi discipulorum ejus  
abierunt retro; et jam non cum illo  
ambulabant.*

67. *After this many of his  
disciples drew back and no  
longer went about with him.*

A great number of our Lord's disciples, those he had been talking about, seeing they were unmasked and becoming wholly disgusted, from that moment stopped following him and withdrew. This means they withdrew from the way of perfection which our Lord taught and returned to their former life of flesh and blood. It means also that while they were with our Lord they were closer to God, although their faith was not pure or genuine, and when they withdrew from him they went backwards, for we must always go forward towards God.

68. *Dixit ergo Jesus ad duodecim:  
Numquid et vos vultis abire?*

68. *Jesus said to the twelve,  
"Will you also go away?"*

Our Lord knew well those he had chosen and he said this only to test them, giving them an opening for a more fervent profession of faith to increase their faith and love.

69. *Respondit ergo ei Simon Petrus:*  
*Domine, ad quem ibimus?*  
*Verba vitae aeternae habes.*

69. *Simon Peter answered him,*  
*"Lord, to whom shall we go?*  
*You have the words of eternal life;*

The whole Church was now comprised of these twelve, the others having gone away. Our Lord asked this small Church to give an account of what it thought of him; and it was the leader who answered for the whole Church. In these circumstances, when the apostles had to make a profession of faith, it was always Peter who answered. Peter must answer for the faith of the Church which is entrusted to him; he also has the guaranteed deposit of faith for sharing. Peter's words are wonderful they show the fervour of his faith and his ardent irrevocable attachment to his Master: 'To whom shall we go?' If he had to leave our Lord, he would not know where to go. Those who had just left did know where to go; they were returning to the world. But Peter had left the miserable world with so much generosity and fervour that he had wholly forgotten it and could not return there if he had had to quit our Lord. In spirit he had completely lost sight of the world, and all the affections of his heart were on his Master and the words he uttered. Peter had left only a net but his disposition was so perfect that with that net he left the whole world and would hear no more of it.

'To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'. Our only desire is in you, our sovereign Master. We want to think only of you. We have no longer any love but for you, and our only joy and happiness is in the divine words, full of grace, which come from your adorable lips to fill us with love and kindness. They are words of life, eternal life. They give us that life for which you came, we desire no other life than that. And why, my dearest Master, do you ask us whether we too want to leave you? No! we



do not want to leave you, we want to become ever more attached to you, for no one else has that word of life which thrills us and gives us life: 'to whom shall we go'? That is the language every faithful soul should engage in with its beloved. It was the first leader of the Church who spoke it in his own name, and in the name of those with him.

70. *Et nos credidimus, et cognovimus,  
quia tu es Christus Filius Dei.*

70. *and we have believed, and  
have come to know, that you are  
the Holy One of God."*

As for us, we are not like those faithless ones who did not believe; we do believe, and we are certain, that you are the Christ, the Son of God. St Peter did not understand any more than the others what our Lord's words meant, those words which had scandalised all of them. The apostle nevertheless found them to be words of life, and he gave reasons. He had an enlightened and living faith in our Lord's divinity and mission; and, animated by this living faith, he was increasingly docile to divine grace, which prompted him to submit and adhere in everything and above everything to our Lord. In his mind there was never the slightest inclination to offer resistance; on the contrary, his was a most supple, docile submission to his Master and all his words. Moreover, never was there any murmuring, bitterness or displeasure in his heart. On the contrary, it was filled with tender, affectionate, and ever-increasing love for his Master. And by this same divine grace St Peter, always wholly docile to the grace which guided him, was always ready to listen to his Master and welcome the graces and lights of the divine words. Without being understood, they always had the same effect on him.

71. *Respondit eis Jesus: Nonne  
ego vos duodecim elegi? et ex  
vobis unus diabolus est.*

71. *Jesus answered them, "Did I  
not choose you, the twelve, and  
one of you is a devil?"*

72. *Dicebat autem Judam Simonis  
Iscariotem; hic enim erat  
traditurus eum, cum esset unus  
ex duodecim.*

72. *He spoke of Judas the son of  
Simon Iscariot, for he, one of  
the twelve, was to betray him.*

St Peter answered boldly for all, because he trusted his Master's choice, in virtue of that same faith. Jesus had chosen twelve, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. St Peter thereby felt certain that all of them shared his sentiment, because the Master knew those whom he chose very well. That is why our Lord answered: 'Have I not chosen twelve?' Yet there is a devil even among the twelve'. He said 'devil', a term indicating consummate evil. He said it of Judas Iscariot, but the apostles did not know which of them would be the devil, so they must have been distrustful of each other. Our Lord may have said it in order that the fine profession of faith would not inflate their hearts and give them too much confidence in their powers. We may take it for granted that Judas had been wicked nearly the whole time he was following our Lord, that it was not through a sudden temptation he fell for, from this moment, our Lord gave him the name of 'devil', which expresses extraordinary malice.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

*Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for the Feast and Teaches there.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Post haec autem ambulabat<br/>Jesus in Galilaeam: non enim<br/>volebat in Judaeam ambulare,<br/>quia quaerebant eum Judaei<br/>interficere.</i> | 1. <i>After this Jesus went about<br/>in Galilee; he would not go<br/>about in Judea, because the<br/>Jews sought to kill him.</i> |
| 2. <i>Erat autem in proximo dies<br/>festus Judaorum, Scenopegia.</i>   | 2. <i>Now the Jews' feast of<br/>Tabernacles was at hand.</i>  |

The feast of Tabernacles was approaching and Jesus, instead of going in the direction of Jerusalem to spend the preceding days there preparing for the feast, went on the contrary to Galilee. The feast was drawing very near and the moment had come to go to Jerusalem so as to be on time. The crowd was in Jerusalem and naturally it was expected that Jesus should go there to preach. But it was not the Father's will that he should go there yet, since the Jews were seeking to kill him because he broke the law of the Sabbath and because he presented himself as Son of God, equal to his Father. These blind people considered this a lie and wanted to treat him as a false prophet. The evangelist says that Jesus did not want to go up but, according to what our Lord said above, he never did his own will, but his Father's. We can conclude that he did not wish to because it was not his Father's will.

He did not have to fear the persecution of the Jews, knowing that his time to die for the sins of the world had not come; therefore the Jews would be unable to do anything against him, as he says in another passage. But he acted in accord with his Father's secret will, which was that he should not yet leave himself open to their indictment but wait until the very day of the feast. And then he would be able to escape from their hands and prevent them from seizing him or doing the least harm.

- 
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 3. <i>Dixerunt autem ad eum fratres ejus: Transi hinc, et vade in Judaeam, ut et discipuli tui videant opera tua quae facis.</i> | 3. <i>So his brethren said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the work you are doing.</i>  |
| 4. <i>Nemo quippe in occulto quid facit, et quaerit ipse in palam esse; si haec facis, manifesta teipsum mundo.</i>              | 4. <i>For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things show yourself to the world."</i> |
| 5. <i>Neque enim fratres ejus credebant in eum.</i>  | 5. <i>For even his brethren did not believe in him.</i>  |

Our Lord's relatives did not know the mysteries that took place in his Incarnation and birth. They believed, like the other Jews, that he was Joseph's son, and they had no more faith than the rest. They knew he had acquired a great reputation and won many disciples by the extraordinary power of his works and teaching. They could not be unaware of his innumerable miracles, which were known throughout all Judea and Galilee. They could not help recognizing the reality of these extraordinary facts and the great authority he had acquired over people. But it is a long way from that to faith and they had no more faith than the majority. They had even less for, as relatives, they had temporal views about our Lord which turned out to be obstacles for them. They imagined that he performed all these wonders to win a reputation and bring the world to his feet; that is why they said to him: 'All those who seek renown appear in public, they do not perform their works in secret. You will find the entire population in Jerusalem. Manifest yourself publicly if you do these great things, so that your disciples, seeing what you do, may follow you'. They reasoned very well according to the worldly spirit animating them; they attributed the same kind of sentiments to our Lord, not seeing that his whole conduct was divine and that he was in opposition to the maxims of the world by which they wanted him to act.



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 6. <i>Dixit ergo eis Jesus: Tempus meum nondum advenit; tempus autem vestrum semper est paratum.</i> | 6. <i>Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.</i> |
|--|--|

It is probable that our Lord's relatives were ready to leave for Jerusalem (this seems to be implied by the sequel) and wanted him to accompany them. The words 'leave here', mean 'come with us'. They probably desired this out of vanity, for all to see that the great prophet belonged to them. He replied: 'I do not want to go with you, because my time to go has not yet come. You are always ready, because you always do what you want; you follow only your own tastes and what serves your own satisfaction. Moreover, no one stops you from going to Jerusalem. But this is not true for me. It is my Father who decides all my moves and determines all the circumstances in which his plans must be executed. Now the divine will has not declared that I ought to go with you'.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 7. <i>Non potest mundus odire vos; me autem odit, quia testimonium perhibeo de illo, quod opera ejus mala sunt.</i> | 7. <i>The world cannot hate you, because I testify of it that its works are evil.</i> |
|---|---|

He continued: 'You risk nothing in going up to Jerusalem; the world cannot hate you since you belong to the world. You act according to its maxims; you submit to all its perverse laws, and the world cannot hate itself. But it is different for me. The world hates me because I testify against it and its works. I condemn it by all I am and all I do. I oppose the world with all my power; I thus oppose everything in it and all its works because they are evil. That is why the world hates me. The world and I are in opposition because it does not find in me what is proper to it, but one who judges, condemns and destroys it'.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 8. <i>Vos ascendite ad diem festum hunc, ego autem non ascendo ad diem festum istum, quia meum tempus nondum impletum est.</i> | 8. <i>Go to the feast yourselves; I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."</i> |
|--|---|

9. *Haec cum dixisset, ipse mansit in Galilaea.*

9. *So saying, he remained in Galilee.*

‘That is why you may go up to this feast; you have nothing to fear; no one seeks to harm you. But I shall not yet go there for the approaching feast, because my time has not yet come. When my Father tells me to go up, I will go up. As he does not tell me at this time, I will not go up with you’. Having said that, he let them depart on their own and remained in Galilee.

10. *Ut ascenderunt fratres ejus, tunc et ipse ascendit ad diem festum non manifeste, sed quasi in occulto.*

10. *But after his brethren had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.*

When his relatives had departed, Jesus also went up, when his time had come. His Father wanted him to appear suddenly on the feast day when the whole people would be assembled, so that no one would know in advance that he was in Jerusalem. That is why he left after the others, so as to meet no one on the way and remain unknown.

Although he had told his relatives that he would not go up to the feast, he did not mean he would not go at all, but the point was whether he would go with them, and this was all he meant when he said he was not going. And his relatives must have understood it this way, since he had told them he was not going because his time had not yet arrived. However, as he had said nothing about going later on, they must have been uncertain whether he would come or not. But we should not think he wanted to deceive them when he spoke those equivocal words, for there was no Yes and No in him.

11. *Judaei ergo quaerebant eum in die festo, et dicebant: Ubi est ille?*

11. *The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?"*

The Jews expected him to attend the feast, as was his custom, and as they failed to see him they sought him everywhere and said

to one another: 'Where is the great prophet, this wonderful man?' But it seems rather that those who sought him were the leaders of the people and they sought to bring about his death; so they said, 'Where is the seducer, the false prophet?'

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 12. <i>Et murmur multum erat in turba de eo. Quidam enim dicebant: Quia bonus est. Alii autem dicebant: Non, sed seducit turbas.</i> | 12. <i>And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."</i> |
|--|--|

The people, seeing that some were trying to harm him, murmured among themselves. Some, seeing that their leaders were persecuting him, regretted this, saying that he was a good man and a true prophet; others, on the contrary, misled by the attitude of the Jews, said he was not good, he was deceiving the crowd. The Pharisees were expert in hiding their jealousy and hatred, so much so that several among the people truly believed that these Pharisees were moved by pure zeal for the law and that this was their reason for persecuting our Lord. These poor people made their choice, believing that he who had come to sacrifice himself for the sins of all and deliver them from the seduction of demons and the flesh was himself a seducer.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 13. <i>Nemo tamen palam loquebatur de illo, propter metum Judaeorum.</i> | 13. <i>Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.</i> |
|--|---|

However, people were afraid to show too clearly that they had favourable sentiments towards him, for they feared the Jews, who were likely to persecute those who took our Lord's side as much as our Lord himself.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 14. <i>Jam autem, die festo mediante, ascendit Jesus in templum, et docebat.</i> | 14. <i>About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.</i> |
|--|--|

Jesus gives us the example of the ordinary precautions we should take in divine things, even though we are certain of God's help. He went up to the temple around the middle of the feastday. He did so fearlessly, for he knew his hour had not yet come. He did not want to go up earlier in the day, as he knew the Jews were waiting to take hold of him; it was not in accord with his Father's will that he should manifest his power in those circumstances. He waited for the Pharisees to go off guard. Then he came into the open and began to teach. In the middle of the temple he spoke of the kingdom of God, making use of his ordinary graces and power.

15. *Et mirabantur Judaei, dicentes:  
Quomodo hic litteras scit, cum non  
didicerit?*

15. *The Jews marvelled at it,  
saying, "How is it that this man  
has learning, when he has never  
studied?"*

The Jews who were persecuting him heard him speak so wonderfully that they were astonished and said to each other: 'How can this man speak so well, although he has never been educated?' They were constantly occupied studying the law and valued such knowledge highly. They imagined they were the only people who had mastered the law by reason of all the labour and toil they had gone through in studying it. Now, seeing with what ease our Lord spoke, and how he spoke words full of grace which touched everyone, they could not help wondering. They knew that he had not studied like them, for it seems they had obtained information about him and his early years. This was a wonder they were unable to explain and, as they had not the faith, they could not think or conclude that this teaching came from on high. They thought he had invented it from his own resources like the philosophers.

16. *Respondit eis Jesus, et dixit:  
Mea doctrina non est mea, sed  
ejus qui misit me.*

16. *So Jesus answered them,  
"My teaching is not mine but  
his who sent me;*



That is why our Lord said: 'My teaching, which you hear and admire so much, is not mine; it is not an invention as you believe; it is not from human beings I have learned it, nor did I make it up. But it is the teaching of him who sent me'. Indeed the light and knowledge found in our Lord were the eternal light of the Father; they were substantially in him. All that our Lord taught through his human lips was nothing else than the external expression of the teaching and communication which in his human nature he received from the eternal knowledge hidden within. All the rays of light which that humanity shed on souls were only the outpouring of the adorable light which through the divine word shone over souls. This divine teaching came from our Lord as man by reason of the hypostatic union of divine and human nature. But it belonged originally and essentially to the Father, being only a reflection of the light of the Word, which he gave to the sacred humanity. That is why our Lord says: 'My teaching, which belongs to me, is not originally mine, it is the teaching of him who sent me. The Father has sent his light, wisdom, substantial and essential knowledge on earth. To me he gave it, that I might transmit some of it to you. Hence I should not attribute it to myself as if it had originated in me for, on the contrary, it has come from the bosom of him who sent me'. We could also explain the words, 'my teaching' as the doctrine which I teach. But the term 'my' would be incorrect, it would be false, if taken literally. Our Lord may have used the expression in the sense given to it by people, just as we speak of the law of Moses, although Moses did not invent the law.

It is also possible to explain differently the words: 'but it is his who sent me'. Our Lord in all this doctrine teaches only the will of his Father, which he manifests to people. Hence the fundamentals and substance of this doctrine are the will of his Father; the teaching, therefore, is not his own but the Father's. But this explanation is almost the same as the first. Why did the Father send his substantial light upon earth and want it to be transmitted to people? It was in order to intimate his will and give the graces to have it accomplished.

17. *Si quis voluerit voluntatem ejus facere, cognoscat de doctrina utrum ex Deo sit, an ego a meipso loquar.*

17. *if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*

'If anyone wants to do the will of the one who sent me, that is, of my heavenly Father, the doctrine I teach will itself show him whether it is God's doctrine or whether I speak only of myself'. This is one of the great wonders of our Lord's divine teaching; it does not need proof or testimony. We have merely to proclaim it to have it accepted by those who sincerely desire to do his Father's will. They never fail to recognize God's voice speaking, and this holy will is perfectly expressed in that sacred message. However, we must be seriously disposed to know and carry out God's will. Otherwise we shall remain blind as before. Note that our Lord does not say: 'those who want to know' but 'those who want to do'. Curiosity of the mind, however pious it may be, does not instruct us in the word of God; but the desires of the heart obtain the unique grace of recognizing the Father's teaching in our Lord's divine word. The following are the reasons why this sacred doctrine reveals his divinity.

1) It is self-evident. It is so pure and holy that we recognize its source. And in this it differs infinitely from human teachings. The latter, however beautiful, always bear traces of their authors, of their defects and imperfections, and especially of self-love and self-seeking. On the contrary, our Lord's teaching breathes a seeking of his Father's glory in everything, in the precepts laid down, in the purpose proposed, in the sentiments inspired, in the way it is conceived and explained. Therein we find always the glory of God and his will but no purely human sentiment. This sort of teaching can come only from God. And if it were the product of a merely human mind it would not be so perfectly divine in its whole breadth and content.

2) Our Lord's doctrine also clearly emanates directly from God because of its effects in the souls it penetrates. The teaching

of an ordinary person has no efficacy of itself; it is without life. The words express the thoughts of a mere human. Hence they are something extraneous to the hearer; the teaching is not vital or luminous. It is a message coming from a blind, weak, finite intellect, passing over to another blind, weak, finite intellect and is thus powerless. On the contrary, the doctrine coming directly from God is an emanation of his thought, that is, of the eternal Word of the Father. The expression of this adorable thought, which from all eternity was in the Father's bosom, is imparted to our Lord and by divine grace is transmitted to our intellect.

The Father's eternal Word becomes the thought of our mind and the food of our heart, through its acceptance by our will. The will tastes and relishes this divine thought received by the intellect, a thought that is luminous, living and life-giving. This divine thought emanating from the bosom of God is luminous, it lives by itself and in itself. And we receive a share, a participation in that wonderful thought by divine grace, according to our small capacity and limited being. We receive the light and life into ourselves, and as we adhere to that holy light and life, we are wonderfully enlightened and vivified.

This light and life are powerful and efficacious of themselves. The light is powerful because it is the light and life of the Father and it possesses the Father's omnipotence. It is efficacious (but only in souls of good will, according to our Lord's words: 'If anyone wants to do...') for our intellect has been made by it and cannot receive light from elsewhere. Our will, which is made to enjoy this light and life, can receive full and true satisfaction only in this light. Not only is it the unique light for everyone coming into this world, but it is our whole life, and outside of it our will finds no life.

That is why it is not foreign to us, like the thought of another created intelligence. We are made solely for it, 'and our heart is restless until it rests in it' (cf. St Augustine, *Confessions*, I,1). As soon as our soul receives it, it feels that it possesses what it should have had from the beginning. Moreover, as we seek to accomplish

---

God's will, since it is as vivifying as it is luminous, it gives us strength and even enjoyment itself, and great happiness in fulfilling it. Again, this divine doctrine does not proceed from a finite intelligence. It fully satisfies, bringing into our intelligence all the light it can stand, so that nothing needs to be added, omitted, modified or changed, as is always needed in human teachings, to which everyone makes changes to adopt them to one's own outlook. That is why the divine doctrine is stable, because it is the same in all, and is sufficient without need of restriction or modification. But in order to receive this divine light and life good will is always needed. It is impossible to recognize that our Lord's doctrine has emanated from his Father if good will is absent, for then we would not experience its good effects. In these circumstances the true doctrine would not be communicated to our intelligence. That which is divine in itself would become human for us, since we would not be taking our Lord for Master but our own intelligence. Instead of listening to him so that he could instruct us in this doctrine, we would judge it according to our poor finite mind, according to our own tastes and inclinations, and according to the way things appear to our senses misled by our passions.

18. *Qui a semetipso loquitur, gloriam propriam quaerit: qui autem quaerit gloriam ejus qui misit eum, hic verax est, et injustitia in illo non est.*

18. *He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*

Besides the first proof of his mission, which is his teaching, a proof that will affect only people of good will, our Lord gives another that everyone can recognize. He who speaks of himself seeks always his own glory and gives all the honour of his doctrine to himself. On the contrary, he who seeks the glory of him who sent him in all his teaching preaches the truth in the name of him who sent him; of necessity the doctrine has to come from the one who sent him. In him there is no injustice if all his



works and actions are said or done in the name, and for the glory, of the one who sent him. He is true in his doctrine and righteous in his conduct, for his teaching comes from the one who sent him and his conduct is in harmony with his teaching. From this the Jews should have concluded necessarily that our Lord was sent by his Father and that he proclaimed only the Father's doctrine, because in all he said and did he sought always and only his Father's glory. Our Lord had already said: 'I do not seek my own glory but the glory of him who sent me' (cf. Jn 8:50). And all his words and conduct showed this so clearly that the Pharisees were obliged to admit it. For instance, on the subject of paying tribute to Caesar, they said: 'Master, you have no respect of persons (that is, when God's glory is at stake), you have consideration for God alone...' (cf. Lk 20:21 and parallel verses in other Gospels). By the words quoted above our Lord replied to two things: first, he showed that his doctrine was not his own invention but his Father's; secondly, he showed that his own conduct was just and irreprehensible as it was for the glory of and in accordance with the will of his Father who sent him.

19. *Nonne Moises dedit vobis legem,  
et nemo ex vobis facit legem?*

19. *Did not Moses give you the law?  
Yet none of you keeps the law.  
Why do you seek to kill me?"*

20. *Quid me quaeritis interficere?  
Respondit turba, et dixit: Daemonium  
habes, quis te quaerit interficere?*

20. *The people answered, "You  
have a demon! Who is seeking to  
kill you?"*

Our Lord had just shown that he had to accomplish his Father's law and that in all his works and words he had to act in virtue of that will and for the glory of his Father, having been sent by him. By that fact our Lord was perfectly vindicated of the accusation that he had acted against the law of Moses. He had not acted against the law for he was not subject to the Old Law, since he was sent by his Father to establish a new law or doctrine, which he received from his Father. (And, even if he was subject to it, this

would not hold in the things his Father wanted him to do in a different way.) Therefore the persecution of the Jews was unjustified.

Our Lord gave still another reason, blaming them for not observing the law of Moses, to which they were subject. Unlike our Lord, they had no excuse for not observing it. But in spite of that they did break it. So how can they accuse our Lord of not observing a law to which he is not bound, whereas they themselves do not obey the law binding them? That is why he says: 'Was it not to you that Moses gave the law? And you do not observe it; why then do you want to kill me for not observing it?'

Another explanation is possible. He had just shown that he came to establish his new doctrine. Then he said: 'Did not Moses give you a law in which he spoke about me, in which he counsels you to listen to me and obey me? Listen to him. None of you keeps the law. If you do, then why, instead of listening to me, do you want to kill me?' Our Lord said this in a general way, without specifying individuals. Those who had made plans to kill him understood well what he meant. But the crowd no doubt feared that he addressed these words to them. Besides a great number did not know for certain that the princes of the people had these designs. So they felt accused of having made a plan and, as they had little or no faith, they became angry and indignant. But our Lord did not reply to the insult, he continued to talk to those he had in mind before, but as if his words were addressed to the crowd.

21. *Respondit Jesus et dixit eis:  
Unum opus feci, et omnes miramini.*

21. *Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel at it.*

22. *Propterea Moises dedit vobis  
circumcisionem; (non quia ex Moise  
est, sed ex patribus) et in sabbato  
circumciditis hominem.*

22. *Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man upon the sabbath.*

23. *Si circumcisionem accipit homo  
in sabbato, ut non solvatur lex Moisi;*

23. *If on the sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that*

*mihi indignamini, quia totum hominem  
sanum feci in sabbato.*

*the law of Moses may not be  
broken, are you angry with me  
because on the sabbath I made a  
man's whole body well?*

Here our Lord showed where they were wrong, even according to their customs and traditions. To understand this reasoning we must keep in mind: 1) That the law of Moses (cf. Lev 12:3) ordered children to be circumcised on the eighth day; the law dates from Abraham (cf. Gen 17:10) but received new force through Moses.

(2) The traditions of the Jews which considered it against the law to apply remedies on the Sabbath day also considered it a sin, even a grave sin perhaps or at least a serious one, to make a wound, to spill blood. It was one of the works forbidden, punishable by death.

(3) However, tradition demanded that when the eighth day of a child fell on a Sabbath day the circumcision should still be done, not because that law was older than the law of Moses, but because the law of Moses demanded that circumcision be done on the eighth day. Outside this case circumcision could never be done on the Sabbath.

(4) We must also know that, according to these traditions, a health reason sufficed to postpone the circumcision of a child of eight days to another time; this was authorized by Moses' conduct, who had not circumcised the Israelites the whole time they were journeying through the desert.

This enables us to follow our Lord's reasoning, for which the Pharisees had no answer. 'I have performed a work on the Sabbath day and you are all astonished that I broke the law of the Sabbath. However, I shall show you that you do as much for less reason. You circumcise a child on the eighth day, and by this you transgress the laws of your traditions more seriously than I have done, and you do it so as not to violate a law of Moses, which demands in a general way that a child be circumcised on the eighth day, although it does not mention the Sabbath. After that,

you are angry with me for breaking what you consider a grave law of your traditions, which I did for a more important reason, for it was a matter of curing a whole human being. After all, does a person's health not take precedence over a particular law? Circumcision, according to these same traditions, is inferior to one's entire health. Moreover, the law of charity comes first'.

24. *Nolite judicare secundum faciem,  
sed justum judicium judicate.*

24. *Do not judge by appearances,  
but judge with right judgment."*

By all that our Lord had just said, he proved that they had no just reason for killing him. And if they did try to kill him, they would thereby break the law which forbids them to judge according to their particular prejudices rather than according to justice. Clearly in this judgment they were acting not according to justice but out of hatred for our Lord.

### *The People Discuss the Origin of the Messiah*

25. *Dicebant ergo quidam ex  
Jerosolymis: Nonne hic  
est quem quaerunt interficere?*

25. *Some of the people of Jerusalem  
therefore said, "Is not this the man  
whom they seek to kill?"*

26. *Et ecce palam loquitur, et nihil  
ei dicunt. Numquid vere  
cognoverunt principes  
quia hic est Christus?*

26. *And here he is, speaking  
openly, and they say nothing  
to him! Can it be that the  
authorities really know that  
this is the Christ?*

Then came people who lived in Jerusalem and knew better than the outsiders what the leaders were planning. They had heard that the princes of the people had conspired to have our Lord put to death and were prepared to seize him if he came to the temple for the feast. And now they saw him preaching openly, and said to themselves in surprise: 'Have the princes found out that he is the Messiah?' That is what they asked one another.



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 27. <i>Sed hunc scimus unde sit; Christus autem cum venerit, nemo scit unde sit.</i> | 27. <i>Yet we know where this man comes from; and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."</i> |
|--|---|

The Jews had confused ideas about the greatness of the Messiah, even though it was clearly expressed in the prophets. But their traditions, and the false notions which had been circulated about him, confused them. Their ancestors had a clearer view, although they were farther removed from the Messiah's coming. They knew that the first origin of the Messiah had to be before the ages. They also knew that he was the son of David and was to be born in Bethlehem. Although they knew he was to be born in Bethlehem from the family of David, they said that his descent would be unknown, 'whence he may be'. They argued about the prophecy, 'who shall recount his generation?' (Is 53:8), that said that the generation of the Messiah would be an extraordinary one which no one could understand or speak worthily about. But since they had false ideas about the Messiah, everything was confused in their minds, leaving them with a very poor grasp of what the prophets had foretold. That is why they considered the difficulty they proposed unanswerable: that they knew where Our Lord came from. They did not understand that he was to have two origins: the first: 'who will describe his origin' – eternal origin; the second: his origin according to the flesh 'from the house of David'.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 28. <i>Clamabat ergo Jesus in templo, docens et dicens: Et me scitis, et unde sim scitis et a me ipso non veni, sed est verus qui misit me, quem vos nescitis.</i> | 28. <i>So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true and him you do not know.</i> |
|--|--|

As this error was common among the Jews – already several times the remark had been made: 'Is not this the son of Joseph?' – our Lord raised his voice to make himself heard by the whole

people, in order to enlighten them about everything that confused their minds. Many Christians later on have fallen into the same error of confusing the two natures which were united in the Messiah. One of these natures was generated in a way that is inscrutable to human beings and even to angels, because it took place eternally in the Father; the other was by descent from David, in the weakness of the flesh. Our Lord was deeply opposed to the errors of the human mind which rejects what it does not understand. He raised his voice most powerfully, and it will resound until the end of time in the ears of the Church's children, to make them preserve the true doctrine that forever will be the consolation of their souls, to raise up on high their fallen nature which is in so sad and sorry a state.

Our Lord attaches great importance to this point of doctrine, because the Jews had fallen into a fundamental error through not knowing clearly the divine descent of the Messiah. After all, our whole salvation is connected with this vital article of faith, which is the foundation of all our belief. The Jews' ignorance of the two natures prevented them from recognising the divine origin of the Messiah, but they nevertheless expected an extraordinary begetting; so they fell into a twofold error about the person of our Lord, for they said they knew his origin but in fact they did not know his divine origin.

Our Lord retorted, to dispel the confusion in their minds and free them from both errors: 'You know me and you know my descent; that is true from the human standpoint, because you recognise in me the Son of man, who has been with you in his human nature since his infancy. But this is not everything you must consider in me. There is also another nature whose source you do not know and which you do not know to be in me; and I have not come of myself. The one whom you know, that is, the Son of man, did not come of himself; the True One sent me'. Our Lord calls the Father who sent him 'the true one', to distinguish that sending or mission from the mission of the prophets. Then he gave only partial instruction in image and symbol. The mission of the

---

prophets did not impart essential truth. In Our Lord the mission has brought the essential substantial truth through the sending of the Word into human nature, and by that human nature into his works. It is the only mission of essential truth that has existed and it will exist forever. 'You do not know him who sent me. Therefore, my origin (remains) inscrutable to all creatures'.

29. *Ego scio eum; quia ab ipso sum, et ipse me misit.*

29. *I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."*

In verse 29 our Lord further explains, so that no one could misunderstand: I know him in his essence, because I possess the substance of his being. 'I come from him'; this does not mean separation but rather reception of the divine being by generation. He does not need to say that he has the whole nature of his Father; that goes without saying, since God is indivisible. Therefore our Lord must know him, since from all eternity he is in the Father's bosom and possesses his whole essence. Our Lord uses the phrase, 'from him', to show the difference between his eternal, essential existence in the bosom of his Father and his corporal and substantial existence in the sacred humanity, which is a creature and therefore outside the bosom of the Father. That is why he adds, 'and he sent me', as if to say, 'If I appear to you here as limited in my humanity, I, nevertheless, am in the bosom of my Father from all eternity. He it is who sent me to dwell thus in my flesh in your midst by being begotten in Mary's womb'.

30. *Quaerebant ergo eum apprehendere, et nemo misit in illum manus, quia nondum venerat hora ejus.*

30. *So they sought to arrest him but no one laid hands on him because his hour had not yet come.*

The Jews well understood that our Lord was calling himself Son of God and they wanted to seize him, but his was a divine person, and it is quite impossible to seize the Son of God when he does not wish. So no one laid a hand on him. They certainly wanted to apprehend him; they were sufficiently faithless and

malicious to do so, and they did what they could to seize him, but when it came to executing their plan there issued from our Lord an almighty energy that prevented them from laying hands on him. But why did they apprehend him so easily the following year? Why did the divine Word not resist then as he did now? Because it was the hour determined from all eternity in the Father's decrees, he allowed the forces of darkness to have power over him. But until then they were unable to touch him because it was not his Father's will.

### *Jesus Foretells his Approaching Departure*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>31. <i>De turba autem multi crediderunt in eum et dicebant: Christus cum venerit, numquid plura signa faciet quam quae hic facit?</i></p> | <p>31. <i>Yet many of the people believed in him; they said, "When the Christ appears will he do more signs than this man has done?"</i></p> |
|--|--|

This is something wonderful. The crowd of poor people, with little or no knowledge of the law and the prophets, believed but those versed in sacred science wanted the death of him who had come to give life, the author of life and life itself. This is something we shall always find among the learned – even those well versed in sacred science – when they are affected by some passion, and do not seek diligently to overcome their self-love. This self-love is often shocked when required to do things which ought to help towards their salvation or sanctification. They avoid the issue by applying their learning badly or by appealing to false ideas.

Still more unfortunate are the learned, the doctors of the law of God, full of themselves, thinking of themselves as people of importance. They approach in a spirit of criticism everything they fail to understand immediately, or simply do not know, sometimes even the most sacred things. In them are found the greatest obstacles, for which they themselves are responsible, to that living, vivifying faith which our Lord's grace imparts to simple souls to lead them to a high degree of perfection. In



contrast with the latter the learned remain dragging themselves through earthly mud, which they prize, because they are enslaved by their inclinations. They remain imperfect in their sluggish behaviour when it comes to raising their mind and heart to God; they are scarcely able to make any sacrifices for him, slaves of human praise and blame that they are. In a word, they are imperfect and crude in the ways of God and his holy love. They know divine reality only by name or from reading but have never experienced its fruit. Still less do they possess its substance.

In the crowd several, 'a great number', believed in our Lord. Their hearts had been touched by the grace of his word; then they recalled his many great miracles, which convinced their minds and enlivened their faith. So they said: 'We are told that he is not the Christ, but, when the Christ comes, will he perform more miracles than this person has worked? And why not believe that he is the Christ?' This was as much as to say: 'The Christ who is coming could not work more miracles than this person, nor could he manifest more power: he is the Christ'.

32. *Audierunt pharisaei turbam  
murmurantem haec de illo; et  
miserunt Principes et Pharisaei  
ministros, ut apprehenderent eum.*

32. *The Pharisees heard the crowd  
thus muttering about him, and  
the chief priests and Pharisees  
sent officers to arrest him.*

The Pharisees and rulers of the people, seeing that the crowd believed, and spoke openly about our Lord as the Messiah and admired his great miracles, were filled with jealous fury. It was not only because our Lord was winning the praise and veneration of the people which the Pharisees would have liked for themselves alone, but also because this intense veneration and admiration, which the people had for him because of his miracles and doctrine, completely discredited and condemned them in their doctrine and conduct. For our Lord constantly reprimanded the Pharisees for their behaviour, lying and hypocrisy. They sent henchmen to arrest him, hoping to destroy his popularity and

discredit his reputation as Messiah among the people and then kill him after the feast. It seems from what happened that they did not plan to take him immediately, but to await a favourable moment to seize him, for they knew it was not easy to seize him while among the crowd, who admired him and regarded him as the Messiah.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>33. <i>Dixit ergo eis Jesus: Adhuc modicum tempus vobiscum sum; et vado ad eum qui me misit.</i></p> | <p>33. <i>Jesus then said, "I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to him who sent me;</i></p> |
|---|--|

Jesus knew what was taking place; from the temple where he was preaching he saw the Pharisees and princes gathered. He also saw the guards arriving, ready to seize him at the first opportune moment. At the same time, he knew that the moment would not come during the feast but some months later. So he addressed those who had been posted by the Pharisees, but also continued to speak to the people. He spoke not only to the Pharisees but also to all their followers who did not believe in him and thought he deserved death. Our Lord said, 'You are in a hurry to take my life but the time has not yet come; wait a short while, I shall be with you only a short while, and then I shall return to my Father who sent me'.

In saying this our Lord announced his glorious Resurrection and Ascension. He seems to say that their premature efforts to remove him from this world are useless; he will leave only when he decides to. 'I still remain with you for a little while; I will go to him who sent me when the time I want to stay has passed'.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>34. <i>Quaeritis me, et non invenietis; et ubi ego sum, vos non potestis venire.</i></p> | <p>34. <i>You will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come."</i></p> |
|---|---|

The Messiah appeared among the Jews, they did not want him, they persecuted him. They could not wait for the moment determined by the Father's will to deliver him into their power. They were eager to kill him before the appointed time, if they

could, so great was their hatred, so great their hurry to be rid of him. Ever since he died they have been looking for him, for a good eighteen centuries now and cannot find him. They have looked for him (they who killed him) in the midst of great evils which have afflicted them. They rejected the genuine Messiah, the Almighty, and they found one like Barcochebas (a 2nd century A.D. Jewish anti-Roman rebel [ed.]), perhaps the greatest affliction that overwhelmed them. It was fitting that they should find a Barcochebas to complete their ruin for in place of the Saviour they had chosen Barrabas. This is what the divine Messiah said: 'You will have none of me. You want to bring about my death. You will succeed in this, a little later, not now. You will lose me, but I will go into the glory of him who sent me. My humanity will enter into the Father's eternal bosom, where I am from all eternity. And you who now refuse your Saviour, the only salvation which has been sent to you by my Father, will lose him for yourselves, and after that you will seek him. I am the One you will seek without realizing it, but you will not find me, for I will not reappear among you in my weakness, as I appear now to gather all the sheep that have gone astray, to cure the sick and raise the dead. I shall be in my Father's bosom, where you can never come'.

The reason they cannot come to his Father's bosom is that access to the Father is possible only through him, through that sacred humanity united with the Word. He is the only name given to people by which they can be saved. But the Jews rejected him, bringing about his death, and they absolutely refused to recognise him. They sought their salvation elsewhere and were unable to find it, for they sought it where it cannot be found; and where he is they cannot go except through faith in him. That is why divine Wisdom said: 'Where I am you cannot come'. He said: 'Where I am', in the present tense, to let them know that, when he says he is going to him who sent him, it does not mean he was not there while he spoke (by his divine nature – ed.); but it means he will

return to the bosom of the Father with his humanity, there where he is from all eternity in his divinity.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>35. <i>Dixerunt ergo Judaei ad semetipsos:</i><br/> <i>Quo hic iturus est, quia non</i><br/> <i>inveniemus eum? Numquid</i><br/> <i>in dispersionem gentium</i><br/> <i>iturus est, et docturus gentes?</i></p> | <p>35. <i>The Jews said to one another,</i><br/> <i>"Where does this man intend to</i><br/> <i>go that we shall not find him?</i><br/> <i>Does he intend to go to the</i><br/> <i>Dispersion among the Greeks and</i><br/> <i>teach the Greeks?</i></p> |
| <p>36. <i>Quis est hic sermo quem dixit:</i><br/> <i>Quaeretis me et non invenietis:</i><br/> <i>et ubi sum ego, vos non potestis</i><br/> <i>venire?</i></p>  | <p>36. <i>What does he mean by saying,</i><br/> <i>You will seek me and you will not</i><br/> <i>find me,' and, 'Where I am you</i><br/> <i>cannot come'?"</i></p>  |

The Jews did not understand what our Lord meant. They would seek him but not find him, they would be unable to come where he was. They may have thought he was threatening them for giving such a bad reception to his teaching and seeking to do him harm. Perhaps also they thought he would escape and so spoke like that. And because the prophets had often predicted the conversion of the Gentiles by the Messiah, especially Isaiah, who is full of that prediction, they feared he would leave them to go and fulfil what the prophets had said. That would show up their jealousy, for although they sought to have him killed, they also feared he would make a great name for himself among the people to discredit them. It would be an even greater source of hatred and jealousy for them if he set out to convert the Gentiles. Of this we see a clear example in St Paul, who for this reason suffered untold evils from faithless Jews. Their words manifested their uneasiness; they kept questioning one another, asking what those words might mean, what they intended.

### *The Promise of Living Water*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>37. <i>In novissimo autem die magno</i><br/> <i>festivitatis stabat Jesus, et clamabat:</i></p> | <p>37. <i>On the last day of the feast,</i><br/> <i>the great day, Jesus stood up and</i></p> |
|--|---|



*Si quis sitit, veniat ad me, et bibat.*

*proclaimed, "If anyone thirst, let  
him come to me and drink.*

'On the last day', whether it was the very day the Pharisees sent people to arrest him, or whether they could not arrest him on that day but would have to wait for another day, the fact remains that on the last and most solemn day of the feast our Lord addressed the following words to people who came to the temple in greater numbers. Jesus, filled with grace and heavenly gifts that abounded to overflowing, ardently desired to spread them in souls. His love for souls was so great that he wished to fill them, to inundate them with those graces and divine gifts; and so ardent was his desire that he could restrain himself no longer. So he cried out forcefully, calling everyone to himself.

He calls those who thirst and he is himself parched with thirst. The difference is that those he calls are thirsting to drink from his fountains of grace, in their weakness and total privation of that salutary water, which can satiate their souls perishing from apathy. Jesus, on the contrary, thirsts to give to drink through the superabundance of his love for our wretched souls; he has a burning desire to fill all souls and satiate them. And so immense is this thirst of our Lord that the sum total of the thirsts of all parched souls cannot equal Jesus' thirst for each one of them.

Is it to be wondered at that on the solemn day of the feast he cried out: 'Let him who thirsts come and drink?' O my Lord Jesus, I hear your cry. You call me; Lord, here I am. I am thirsty, my adorable Jesus. Great is my thirst even to fainting, for I am empty and burnt up inside. Take me into yourself and give me to drink from your fountain of salvation; plunge me into it, submerge me, drown me in your heavenly waters. Yes, Lord, I beg you, drown me in these most desirable and desired waters. Drown my concupiscence; drown my pride; drown all my vices and all my defects, so that everything in me that comes from myself may die; may the old creature no longer live, and may there be nothing

more in me than you alone! Grant me this grace, my most kind, lovable and loved Jesus, so that I shall no longer live except by your life and in your life, the life by which you live in your Father's bosom and in the whole body of your elect. Amen!

It is not a matter of receiving ordinary graces from our Lord but a very great abundance of favours and gifts, as the following verse says. The thirst of which our Lord speaks means those ardent desires to belong to him, to be satiated with his graces and divine gifts through the sanctification of one's soul. This thirst is a first condition; without it gifts and graces of sanctification will not be granted. The first step for a person who wants to reach great holiness must therefore be: a burning desire to possess our Lord and his gifts and graces of sanctification (gifts of sanctification, and not extraordinary gifts which raise us above the ordinary. A desire for such extraordinary gifts would not be a holy thirst but one dictated by impure pride, it is never granted but rather punished). The greatness of these sanctifying favours is usually measured according to the greatness and strength of the thirst. Souls which have come to the greatest holiness, surpassing our weak vision, will have begun with an extreme thirst manifesting itself in actions of extraordinary fervour.

People attribute the great fervour and great actions done by these persons, during the beginnings especially, to their fine noble character, to their generous soul, to their ardent temperament always pushing them to extremes. But let us always keep in mind that people are foolish, and always will be, when it comes to reasoning about divine things. We must avoid judging souls which are extraordinarily favoured by God as if they were common souls with a degree of ordinary and common graces. In these latter, their character, nature and temperament manifest themselves at every step. But those illustrious favourites of the great Master are flooded with divine graces, they swim in them. Character and disposition are not wholly eliminated; they show up in their actions; for divine grace, however strong it may be, neither takes away nor changes completely a person's disposition

---

or character. It always leaves more or less of it according to that character's or disposition's conformity with God's plans in the inspirations of this divine grace. But the varying extent, the vivacity and strength, the constancy in action of the person must be attributed to a greater or lesser grace as happened to the saints in accordance with God's designs for them.

Grace gives these great saints strong powerful impulses to which their will strongly assents. Being vividly attracted and greatly strengthened by them, the will takes delight in being carried away by the strong impulses it receives. From this flows a variety of powerful and violent impulses which show themselves in the way these people behave.

However, at the outset, the saints are still imperfect and not sufficiently clear; through the strong desire aroused in their will by the sweet violence of grace, they allow themselves to go farther than the divine impulse prompts. These excesses are found in almost all great saints at the beginning of their entry into the way of divine love. They arise solely from the violent impulse of divine grace in their souls, giving rise to violent desires. They are always a good sign, because they indicate an ardent desire that will attract the fulfilment of the promises our adorable Master makes in these verses.

In these beginnings the great saints still show clearly their particular characters, because in them there is still much of their own activity, and much more imperfection than will appear later on. The stronger the grace and the greater its influence in their actions, the greater will be their merit through the consent of their will. On the contrary, the greater the part played by their own nature so much less will be the merit and perfection of their actions. This is because the value and merit of our actions come from our Lord's merit, which is there for us to draw into ourselves by clinging with all our powers to this adorable Master and his divine inspirations. Above all we must adhere to him by our will; by this our adherence is crowned and completed, it is absolutely necessary. Hence the greater the part played by grace in our

actions the more meritorious and perfect they are because then our Lord's merits are also more fully applied. Consequently the more we attribute to nature in the great actions of the saints the lower we put their holiness. In thinking to exalt them we lessen them.

This thirst can also be understood of those who are tired of seeking satiety in creatures, those whose souls are empty. They suffer and are unhappy and sad, because they fail to find the rest and happiness they so greatly desire. And our Lord invites them to come to him, to leave those leaking cisterns that contain no water – or if they still have some water it is polluted. So he urges them to come to himself, who will satisfy them with a superabundance of pure, delicious water. These poor persons crawl along in their wretchedness. How happy they would be if they came to this immense fountain, to be filled to overflowing with divine water; at present they experience neither happiness nor joy.

These two explanations are not mutually exclusive. 'Let him come to me and drink'. This is the invitation our Lord offers to souls thirsting for holiness. They have merely to come to him and drink in proportion to the greatness and intensity of their thirst. This explains what he said in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied'. They will be satisfied according to the greatness of their hunger and thirst. If their hunger and thirst are great, they eat and drink much; if they are slight, they eat and drink little.

This invitation, which our Lord makes in general to all souls, he makes in particular circumstances to each individual. When he has given them this thirst for justice he draws them to himself; he encourages them, gives them firm confidence, takes them, embraces them, caresses them (as if a mother – ed.) he makes them drink 'from his divine and admirable breasts', that is, from the mysteries of his sacred humanity, and thus satisfies them fully. 'Let him come to me and drink!' Our Lord shows the fervour of devotion. When we have this thirst and burning desire for this



water of salvation, we must constantly tend towards our Lord; and the greater our thirst, the more strongly and fervently we will tend towards him in all things. This goes to show that in order to possess perfection and obtain the great graces of sanctification it is not enough to practise virtues, correct our defects and faults and do good to our neighbour; that is only half the perfect life. The other half, the more important one and its very soul, is the fervour of our devotion, the interior movement of our soul tending towards Jesus in fervent love, with a great desire to please him and draw his graces into itself.

Virtues without devotion are a body without a soul, but ordinarily virtues are not devoid of devotion; it is the devotion in them that constitutes greater or less perfection and makes them pleasing to God. Devotion without virtues is only a phantom, because those who truly drink from the divine fountain necessarily overcome their defects, and acquire the same desires, the same dispositions and the same life as our Lord. This is the direct effect produced on souls by those heavenly waters. Moreover, the thirst of a soul cannot be genuine and its love for our Lord cannot coexist with an entire neglect of its defects and without the practice of virtues; then our devotion would be only self-love. The devotion with which we approach our Lord to quench our thirst is usually accompanied by genuine virtues. However, souls are more or less negligent about acquiring virtues, and then their devotion is somewhat imperfect. But it is always true that devotion must be cultivated with particular care, for it is only at this price that we can drink liberally from the fountain of salvation, the heavenly water of our sanctification.

38. *Qui credit in me, sicut dicit Scriptura, 38. He who believes in me, as the  
flumina de ventre ejus fluent aquae scriptura has said, 'Out of his  
vivae. heart shall flow rivers of living  
water'."*

Our Lord now explains what he means by drinking. It means applying all the powers of our soul to him in faith, to draw into us

the divine waters which are enclosed within him. As a person with burning thirst who comes to a spring of clear beautiful running water applies his mouth and drinks his fill of that salutary water and is refreshed by it, so must the one who has a burning thirst for divine grace apply all the openings of his soul to our Lord, who is the fountain of salvation. He will draw on the divine graces which flow so abundantly from him. None of those openings of the soul should be applied to any other object than this adorable fountain. This is what is meant by believing in our Lord. The more perfect this application of our powers to our Lord, the greater the abundance of graces given to us. Our Lord will impart the most abundant gifts of his Holy Spirit, who will fill us with his holiness, his power and all the other graces he contains, which are ours for the asking. These gifts will so greatly fill us that we will overflow with them, being unable to contain them. And by means of these gifts rivers of grace will flow from us which will spread around and produce excellent fruits of holiness in a multitude of souls. These will be refreshed, satiated, inundated by rivers of graces flowing from us. Not only shall we have life in ourselves, but from us will issue rivers of this sacred water bringing life to countless souls.

From this we may conclude that for those who are called by their state to save souls, and in general for all who desire to procure the salvation and sanctification of souls, the great means is to approach our Lord with this fervour of devotion, drink from this divine fountain of his heart, and apply themselves to it with whole-hearted faith, so that they themselves may be filled completely first. Then from their abundance, and by the gifts of holiness that will certainly be granted them according to the promise of our Lord who is sovereign Truth, they will sanctify others.

Although the great gifts which the divine Master speaks about here are gratuitous and not essential to salvation, that does not prevent them from bringing great holiness to those who possess them, neither does it mean that they are not granted to all who

---

give themselves with fullness of faith to our Lord, for he promises it here; but he wants to give it especially to those whom he wishes to charge with distributing his graces. We should realize however that he does not usually grant these gifts in their entirety but sometimes one, sometimes another, and occasionally several gifts to the same person. Note the words: 'Rivers will flow from his bosom'. These graces will be established abundantly in their souls, and from their depths they will flow out like rivers, to bring life into all souls.

39. *Hoc autem dixit de Spiritu quem  
accepturi erant credentes in eum;  
nondum enim erat Spiritus datus,  
quia Jesus nondum erat glorificatus.*

39. *Now this he said about the Spirit,  
which those who believed in him  
were to receive; for as yet the  
Spirit had not been given, because  
Jesus was not yet glorified.*

By these 'rivers of living water' which were to flow from those who believed in him, our Lord intended the Holy Spirit, which was to be given to all who believed in him in this way. This does not mean that apostles and other faithful disciples had not got the Holy Spirit before our Lord's Passion. They were in the state of grace, and every soul in the state of grace has the Holy Spirit. But our Lord was speaking of that extraordinary and perfect mission of the Holy Spirit, which is already in the soul through baptism. By perfect faith in a soul, our Lord develops and perfects his gifts and favours, and this he does as a result of this particular mission. These gifts of the Holy Spirit had great importance in the early days of the Church; they were very common and produced innumerable conversions. They flowed from almost all Christians like rivers; and still today all the saints have these graces, that is, all souls which give themselves completely and perfectly to our Lord, with the generosity and perfection of faith that the divine Master desires. They leave everything to cling to our Lord alone, the only fountain of living water. In all such souls we shall find highly developed gifts and graces that our Lord promises here. Such gifts were received by the first Christians, although the most

spectacular ones, such as the spirit of prophecy, the gifts of tongues and miracles, were given less frequently. The latter gifts are less sanctifying and less perfect than the former, which deal more directly with the salvation of souls.

Our divine Master always acts in the same way towards all who come to him in search of perfection. But unfortunately these people are rare in our age when people reason much and do little. There is much subtlety about spiritual things; everything is explained. But, at bottom, people rarely act with the fervour and simplicity of our ancestors and our fathers in the faith. People labour at the virtues of those destined to attain perfection but often leave their faith cold. Those who undertake to serve God are more afraid of committing an imprudence than of failing in fidelity to divine love. And directors constantly preach moderation, when they should let souls run and fly in an outburst of faith. We should be infinitely more afraid of deadening and arresting that upsurge given by faith than of seeing someone commit an imprudence. But directors are afraid of compromising their reputations of being good, wise directors. They are afraid of being upbraided if something goes wrong. And the person being directed is still too full of self-love and does not want to be imperfect; he or she wants to have prudence. Prudence! a very dangerous virtue to want. Those who seek it will more often than not find the wrong prudence, the prudence of self-love instead of the prudence of God. Prudence is not the virtue of beginners; we should never even talk to them about it. When they have made great progress, our Lord will give it to them.

I hear the objection: but all the saints reproached themselves towards the end of their lives for having committed imprudences at the beginning of their conversion. Yes, no doubt, all the saints without exception had to reproach themselves with the excesses of their fervour at the beginning of their conversion. But this is a proof in favour of what I say. All or almost all had to blame themselves for having committed imprudences. It is proper to saints to commit imprudences at the beginning. Did they not all become saints in spite of that? It is quite probable and even certain

---



that if they had been over-anxious to avoid imprudence they would not have come to that high degree of holiness.

It is almost impossible not to commit imprudences and excesses in these great beginnings of fervour. And those who want to avoid them either have no genuine fervour or are unfaithful; and in any case they will find it very difficult to become saints and receive those great gifts and favours our Lord promises, because in the beginning people lack the necessary discernment.

When we indulge in scrutinizing and reasoning, we deaden that fervour of mind which is everything. On the contrary, the saints felt this strong impulse, and without scrutinizing it yielded completely to it. And on that account they became saints, no less pleasing to God because of various imperfections. That is why St Ignatius did not indulge in long reasonings when he mortified his body at Manresa. He went too far, for the impulse of grace did not demand all that; he let himself be carried away because the force of grace was extremely violent. But if his fault was so great, how did he come to receive so many graces and favours from our Lord and the Blessed Virgin? Spiritual directors must be on their guard about this. When they see penitents going to extremes they should prevent them, but they should not reason much about it with the penitents nor inspire them with the spirit of prudence. They should simply forbid them, sometimes under a totally different pretext if possible. They must be on their guard against stopping that blessed flowering of grace in the penitents and arresting the total self-denial by which they are drawn to live only in our Lord; for this, precisely, constitutes the holy faith of which our Lord speaks here.

The evangelist says that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified. Three reasons suggest themselves. 1) The Son as well as the Father had to have a share in the mission of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. And since the sacred humanity (of Jesus – ed.) had to merit this mission particularly for us, it was fitting that that humanity be seated at the right hand of the Father to share in the life of the Word in his Father's bosom, so that this mission could

be attributed to the humanity in virtue of its union with the Word. Although the sacred humanity when on earth already enjoyed the glory of his Father, since the Word never left his eternal bosom, and since therefore that humanity was there also, nevertheless the mystery of his glorification was not yet accomplished; hence we were not able to enjoy that mystery directly. (Francis Libermann's theology of the glorification of the humanity of Jesus gets a little muddled here. He speaks of the humanity as already glorified before the Ascension – ed.)

2) The second reason is that our Lord, while on earth, was in a condition of weakness and abasement for us, so it was not the appropriate time to give graces of power and glory like those granted by the great gifts of the Holy Spirit.

3) The third reason is that the Holy Spirit had to be sent to accomplish and perfect in us all the graces of the mysteries our Lord worked for our sanctification. This is why all those mysteries had to be accomplished, not that the divine works might be limited, but that the Holy Spirit could act according to the fullness of the dispositions he would find and apply our Lord's merits. This abundance of the Holy Spirit mentioned by our Lord creates these extraordinary and heroic virtues. This makes saints. Those who have ordinary graces and practise the virtues in an ordinary weak way have not had a share in those gifts because their faith is weak. The apostles, during the whole time of our Lord's life on earth, had not these abundant gifts. And how great was their weakness! As soon as they had received them, they became quite different people.

### *Fresh Discussions on the Origin of the Messiah*

40. *Ex illa ergo turba cum audissent hos sermones ejus, dicebant: Hic est vere propheta.*

40. *When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet."*

41. *Alii dicebant: Hic est Christus. Quidam enim dicebant: Numquid a Galilaea venit Christus?*

41. *Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said. "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?"*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 42. <i>Nonne Scriptura dicit: Quia ex semine David, et de Bethlehem castello, ubi erat David, venit Christus?</i> | 42. <i>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"</i> |
| 43. <i>Dissensio itaque facta est in turba propter eum.</i>   | 43. <i>So there was a division among the people over him.</i>  |

These results show the power of that cry of Jesus in the midst of the people. It was a cry of his love, insatiable in its desire to sanctify souls. So great was his desire to pour his immense riches of sanctification that he expressed it in the midst of faithless people, so that he might attract some at least to himself, to open their minds and hearts to his graces and favours.

It was a very special moment of grace and a movement of extraordinary love that made Jesus cry out in the temple, offering drink to those who were thirsty. Hence his voice, raised higher than usual, also had more strength to penetrate the souls of his hearers. Although he did not perform a miracle on this occasion, his words were so potent that in that great multitude there were only a few who resisted. All the others were moved by a sentiment of faith, in varying degrees, according to their lights just then. Some said he was a prophet speaking; others that he was the Messiah himself. But unfortunately this did not last long. The good feeling and the few good dispositions they had were soon extinguished by the evil inclinations of their hearts. Most of them had all the bad qualities of the soil our Lord speaks of in the parable of the sower; consequently grace had difficulty in taking root, it was unable to prosper and did not last any length.

The evangelist remarks that some resisted this grace: 'some'. They were few, and the reason for their resistance was partly pride in their knowledge, partly a quarrelsome spirit, and partly jealousy and contempt for Galileans. They were jealous of Galilee for producing the Messiah, and numerous other passions intermingled to make them hate our Lord and reject him as their

Messiah. The Messiah was to be a descendant of David, that was true, and was to be born in Bethlehem; that too was true. But if they had examined all the prophecies they would have found a great number seemingly contradicting one another. It was a matter of casting light on all those difficulties. The many miracles our Lord worked and the divine doctrine he proclaimed should have made them more attentive and careful in their search and explanations before judging peremptorily, basing themselves on one or two prophecies that appeared to contradict each other. But when people let themselves be governed by any passion whatsoever, their faculties of judging are obscured and their minds always find plausible reasons to flatter their self-love and malice. Let everyone be on guard; such things happen much more frequently than we imagine, and sometimes in matters of great importance. Those poor Jews were made overtures by grace; passion caused them to offer stubborn resistance and led them to reject the proffered salvation.

44. *Quidam autem ex ipsis volebant apprehendere eum; sed nemo misit super eum manus.*

44. *Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.*

Those who were badly disposed and unwilling to believe were probably pupils of the Pharisees or scribes or doctors, since they quoted the prophets. Knowing the dispositions of their masters and the princes towards our Lord, they made a plan to apprehend him. They were not afraid of reproof over their acts of violence against him; they knew, on the contrary, that they would be commended. Moreover, they were prompted by their own wickedness and want of faith. Perhaps some may even have been heads of the people who had wicked designs, since they saw that almost everyone was on our Lord's side. So they intended to profit by the dissension which had arisen about him among the crowd to take him away. But their plan came to nothing for his almighty power stopped them.



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 45. <i>Venerunt ergo ministri ad pontifices et pharisaeos. Et dixerunt eis illi: Quare non adduxistis illum?</i> | 45. <i>The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?"</i> |
| 46. <i>Responderunt ministri: Numquam sic locutus est homo, sicut hic homo.</i>                                  | 46. <i>The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!"</i>  |

The high priests and chief Pharisees had gathered to wait for the servants to come back whom they had sent to seize him. And no doubt they were waiting impatiently, already mentally seeing him led in in chains. The servants returned and immediately their masters asked: 'Why did you not bring him?' The servants, filled with gentle calm from the words of grace and love they had heard from his lips, cried out in admiration: 'Never did any man speak like this man'. They did not say: 'No man ever worked miracles like this man'. But they gave as proof of their faith the divine character of his words. For it was indeed a great miracle and an evident proof of the presence of the Word of God, who gave such effort to his word, and this on persons who clearly were not able to understand in depth what he said. Here were men sent to seize him and bring him back in chains. They heard him speak, and their fierceness was turned into the meekness of lambs, because his words were gentle and they themselves were docile. Instead of bringing him to their masters they returned alone and took his side.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 47. <i>Responderunt ergo eis Pharisei: Numquid et vos seducti estis?</i>    | 47. <i>The Pharisees answered them, "Are you led astray, you also?"</i>     |
| 48. <i>Numquid ex principibus aliquis credidit in eum aut ex Phariseis?</i> | 48. <i>Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him?</i> |
| 49. <i>Sed turba haec, quae non novit legem, maledicti sunt.</i>            | 49. <i>But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed."</i>          |

The Pharisees took the floor at once, not letting the high priest or leaders of the people speak first. Their false zeal, their

hypocritical, bitter disposition, prevented them from practising self-restraint; they manifested their great Pharisaic pride, the source of their evil conduct. Angrily they said to the servants: 'So you too are seduced?' It would have been much better to let themselves be seduced, but they much preferred seducing others to letting themselves be impressed by the Son of God, who had come to save them.

They called the One who opposed their passion and pride a seducer. This was his only crime! Passion and pride showed themselves clearly in their judgment, since they condemned him without a hearing, without examining his doctrine or conduct. At that time the greatest of criminals was most carefully examined. All sorts of means were used to examine the witnesses, and all sorts of subtleties (as is easily seen from what the Talmud has to say about this matter) in order to absolve a man from the death penalty, even when he was known to be guilty – provided there was no hostility towards him! Here now these people wanted to condemn our Lord to death without giving him a hearing; they said he was a false prophet. But he worked extraordinary miracles! No matter! But his disciples breathed a divine holiness and his speech was full of divine grace. It made no difference! This was only the more reason for Pharisaic pride to be irritated against him, to condemn him without trial. Moreover they feared to examine him, for an examination might show his righteousness and manifest their own error. How great is human malice and the illusions that stem from self-love and other tortuously hidden passions!

We no longer have Pharisees but many people fall into more or less the same illusions and errors! Are there not many who readily condemn their neighbour whether it be a superior, an inferior, or an equal? It would seem that we enjoy finding evil in our neighbour, even desire to. Yet St Paul said that charity does not rejoice in the evil that is done by our neighbour. We like to talk about it to entertain ourselves and others. We make use of a tone

---

of zeal, like the Pharisees, saying we are sorry, and seeming to suffer over it. If we were not deceived by illusions we would know that really we rather somewhat enjoy the presence of malice.

This disposition makes it easy to judge and condemn the innocent as guilty. How many judgments our Lord will have to pronounce at the moment of death over these weak and imperfect servants! He has warned us: 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged'. Still we sit in judgment on our neighbour! To many such Christians who are eager to judge the living and the dead our Lord will say: 'Blind Pharisee, take the beam out of your own eye'.

To prove that our Lord was a seducer they said: Is there any prince or Pharisee who believes in him? They do not forget themselves, but they fail to give the reason they refuse to believe, for it would not prove anything. Moreover, since they condemned him without examination, this judgment clearly lacked all authority. They added a thing that shows their pride because of their contempt for the people – only the mob ignorant of the law believes in him, and it is accursed! Only the Pharisees were blessed because they had knowledge of the law, which they observed as proud hypocrites. Eternal Wisdom did not agree with this judgment and it showed clearly in all circumstances that the crowd of simple people had greater worth than they. They said: This mob does not know the law. But the crowd saw innumerable miracles which were great proofs, and did not offer resistance to grace, as the blind Pharisees did. The Pharisee knew the law but it was as if he did not, for he did not take the trouble to examine whether the one he judged and condemned was not the Messiah foretold by the law.

In order to see more clearly than others, from knowledge of the law and the prophets, they would have had to apply what the law says about the personage claiming to be foretold by the law and the prophets. And they should have examined this the more

carefully because of the many miracles he openly performed. Therefore really the Pharisees were more accursed than the people.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>50. <i>Dixit Nicodemus ad eos, ille qui venit ad eum nocte, qui unus erat ex ipsis:</i></p> <p>51. <i>Numquid lex nostra iudicat hominem, nisi prius audierit ab ipso, et cognoverit quid faciat?</i></p> | <p>50. <i>Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them said to them,</i></p> <p>51. <i>"Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"</i></p> |
|--|---|

Our Lord had prepared this confusing intervention for the Pharisees, who spoke out of pride. They said that there was no one, either among the princes or among the Pharisees, who believed in him; but here was Nicodemus, a prince of the people and a Pharisee, who took our Lord's defence and at least showed he was not antagonistic. The Pharisees judged only according to their feeling of malice. But Nicodemus knew much better than they what it meant to hear the divine words from our Saviour's lips, as he had experienced when he went to question him by night. It did not surprise him that the servants were full of admiration after they had heard our Lord speak. And he could not bear to see him condemned so falsely, since he himself knew that he was truly the One sent by God. Nicodemus had the courage to defend the divine Master's cause, but he had not yet the courage to say that he was a disciple. His courage increased after our Lord's death, when he dared to embalm him with his own hands, unbeholden to the Pharisees.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>52. <i>Responderunt, et dixerunt ei: Numquid et tu Galilaeus es? Scrutare Scripturas, et vide quia a Galilaea propheta non surgit.</i></p> <p>53. <i>Et reversi sunt unusquisque in domum suam.</i></p> | <p>52. <i>They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee."</i></p> <p>53. <i>They went each to his own house.</i></p> |
|--|---|



The Pharisees were furious at seeing that one of the chief leaders, one of their own, came to our Lord's defence, and angrily said: 'Are you then also a Galilean?' Since the Galileans were greatly despised, prejudice made use of everything to procure our Lord's condemnation. Thus they sought to shame Nicodemus for coming to the defence of a Galilean; so they contemptuously asked him whether he too was a Galilean – not by birth, for they knew he was not, but by sentiment. 'Consult the Scriptures and you will see that no prophet will ever come from Galilee'. If Nicodemus had asked them to prove this, they would have had to resort to many subtleties. If they had said 'the Messiah', they might have had a basis for their claim by quoting the passages that declared he was to be born in Bethlehem. But Nicodemus did not maintain that our Lord was the Messiah, he only said it was necessary to examine the case before pronouncing judgment; he thus let it be understood that the man might be a prophet at least. They simply said that no prophet would come from Galilee, supposing that Nicodemus would have no answer and would have to recognize that our Lord was an impostor. What miserable grounds for condemning the Son of God! Nicodemus himself was hardly convinced by this reasoning and it seems he held his ground. And the Council, unable to go further, was obliged to disperse.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *The Adulterous Woman*

*1. Jesus autem perrexit in montem Oliveti. 1. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

We saw in the last chapter, verse 43, that a dissension had broken out in the crowd over our Lord's words. So he left the temple and withdrew to the Mount of Olives to be with his Father. Jesus always withdrew when there was dissension. He never spoke amid trouble and dissension; on such occasions he would speak for us with his Father. The same thing happens in each of us when on a given occasion our senses involve us in trouble and disquiet; Jesus then withdraws into the depths of our soul and no longer speaks to us until peace is restored, as in this circumstance. For we should realize that our Lord's approach in speaking interior words, addressed to each individually, is similar to the way he spoke to the Jews.

Just as he did not speak to the crowd or even let his voice be heard when there was trouble among them, so he withdraws and becomes silent in the interior of every individual. Hence it is of capital importance in the spiritual life to preserve peace of soul in order to listen to our Lord; to avoid scruples and mental distress, or at least entertain a trustful peace in the midst of these afflictions when we are unable to be rid of them; to avoid over-activity, precipitation, haste; to repress all impulses that upset and disturb. It is almost impossible to make progress in the interior life amid agitation and unruly movements of our passions, because progress in the interior life depends on our Lord's manifesting himself in our soul and on his divine conversation. Now when we are troubled, that is, interiorly overactive and agitated, our Lord hides himself and does not speak to us.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. <i>Et diluculo iterum venit in templum et omnis populus venit ad eum, et sedens docebat eos.</i> | 2. <i>Early in the morning he came again to the temple; all the people came to him and he sat down and taught them.</i> |
|---|---|

On Jesus' return, the people gathered around him, moved by his recent preaching. Admiration still filled their minds, eager to hear his holy and saving instructions. This is an image of what takes place in our souls. When we have been in trouble and involved in dissension in our senses and when our passions have been aroused and Jesus has withdrawn, then, when peace has been restored, Jesus returns and speaks again to our heart. The soul had vividly felt its pain and dryness while Jesus was absent and silent. Now it gathers all its powers around to listen attentively and it experiences great delight in listening to him, sometimes greater than before his withdrawal. Jesus, seated restfully as it were in our soul, into which he introduces great calm as in his Father's temple, instructs the soul in holy doctrine and deeply imprints it on the soul. For, when our Lord returns after a period of agitation, he often produces much greater good in souls, which in turn are now more docile and faithful to his interior instructions.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 3. <i>Adducunt autem Scribae et Pharisei mulierem in adulterio deprehensam, et statuerunt eam in medio.</i> | 3. <i>The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and placing her in the midst</i> |
| 4. <i>Et dixerunt ei: Magister, haec mulier modo deprehensa est in adulterio.</i>                           | 4. <i>they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.</i>                             |
| 5. <i>In lege autem Moyses mandavit nobis hujusmodi lapidare. Tu ergo quid dicis?</i>                       | 5. <i>Now the law of Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?"</i>                               |

The scribes and Pharisees had tried to apprehend our Lord; they had been unsuccessful and had noticed that all the people



continued to admire him. Not daring again to arrest him publicly, for fear of not succeeding but starting a tumult instead, they wished to show publicly that our Lord was a false prophet destroying the law. Moreover, they had just been reproved for condemning a man without giving him a hearing, and they may have feared others among the princes of the people besides Nicodemus were on our Lord's side. So they thought up this trick, hoping to make him speak against the law, which would prove he was a false prophet. Great indeed was their malice. They wanted to catch him by his words and thus ruin his good name with the public. They would be justified in the eyes of all for having condemned him, seeming to have done so only after examining him carefully.

They hoped he would speak against the law, because they knew his tender compassion for unfortunate people, his great love for sinners, and his ardent desire to save them. So they brought in this adulterous woman, whom the law explicitly condemned to death. They said: 'Here is a woman who has been taken in adultery'. They quoted the law and asked what he had to say. They put on an air of docility and submissiveness, as if they were disposed to listen and waive their law to follow his word.

- |    |   |    |  |
|----|---|----|--|
| 6. | <i>Hoc autem dicebant tentantes eum, ut possent accusare eum. Jesus autem inclinans se deorsum, digito scribebat in terra.</i>          | 6. | <i>This they said to test him that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.</i>  |
| 7. | <i>Cum ergo perseverarent interrogantes eum, erexit se, et dixit eis: Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat.</i> | 7. | <i>And as they continued to ask him he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."</i> |
| 8. | <i>Et interum se inclinans, scribebat in terra.</i>   | 8. | <i>And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.</i>   |

To understand this text, know that the Pharisees and scribes were extremely corrupt in their morals. (This is common with proud people; these two vices always go together.) The books of the Jews themselves show the great corruption among them at that time. Those crimes of the Pharisees and scribes were kept secret. The people thought that they were holy men completely devoted to observing their law. Since they were the princes of the people and occupied the place of Moses, our Lord acted tactfully towards them for this reason, not revealing their extreme perversion. From time to time he let them feel it by showing his anger, although at the same time not letting the people know their conduct in detail. For instance, he called them whited sepulchres (cf. Mt 23:27) and used other similar terms. (He gives us a good lesson, showing that we must be reserved in speaking about those who have to instruct people in the ways of God, even when they are wicked.)

On this occasion therefore, the Pharisees, who were just as corrupt as the woman they wanted to condemn to torture, came to tempt our Lord in something they should not dare to speak about. They wanted him to be seen favouring adultery and thereby acting contrary to the law. But our most gentle Master did not want to confound them publicly; to spare them he spoke a symbolic language they would easily understand. He bowed down, thus showing that they should be ashamed to tempt him about a matter of which they themselves should be ashamed before God.

Our Lord wrote with his finger on the pavement of the temple (for he was in the temple and so if he wrote on the ground it was on the pavement, but this is not important for understanding what happened). He wrote with his finger to show them what they were; they resembled a man who writes on the ground or on stone with his finger. The characters he forms are true characters, but no vestige of them remains for the eyes of people, for no one can discern what was written. Shameful sins are like that. The accusers had several times committed such sins, like characters written on

the pavement with a finger. Only God, who saw them being committed, knew. Our Lord thereby intimated that he knew their conduct. The evangelist does not say what he wrote, but we may consider it probable that he wrote down their sins. The people were unable to understand, but the guilty ones could easily know what he was writing by following the movement of his finger. By this he also indicated that, if they sincerely repented and humbly bowed down before God, those sins would be forgiven and erased as easily as the characters he was writing on the ground. But the Pharisees, quite taken up with the plan their malice had formed, paid no attention to the divine Master's kindness, nor to what he was doing, and completely failed to learn the lesson symbolically given. Perhaps they felt victorious, thinking they had embarrassed him by their insidious request. They went on questioning him. Our Lord, seeing that they did not understand, although this was caused by their malice, even then had the incomprehensible goodness and gentleness to explain the parable he had symbolically expressed, still in a way that the people would not know he was speaking about the Pharisees' corruption. Then he sat upright again and said a few words to let them follow the parable: 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone'. He did not say 'Let him among you who has not committed fornication or adultery', but he spoke more generally. In this way he protected them before the people while at the same time it was enough to make the accusers realize what he meant, especially from the tone of voice, gesture and circumstances. It is also probable that at the same time he gave them an interior sense of sin and embarrassment in order to make them repent. He then stooped down and wrote on the ground again, probably continuing to write down their sins. This was to make them understand better why he was doing it, now that they were warned.

9. *Audientes autem unus post  
unum exibant, incipientes a senioribus:  
et remansit solus Jesus, et mulier  
in medio stans.*

9. *But when they heard it, they  
went away one by one,  
beginning with the eldest, and  
Jesus was left alone with the  
woman standing before him.*

The Pharisees well understood the meaning of the few words. It seems that all without exception were profoundly corrupt and had committed sins of the flesh. This is clear from our Lord's words, which seem to show that the woman would not be stoned, as no one could cast a stone at her. It is also clear from the fact that all went away; not even one remained. They no longer had any desire to prolong their wicked machinations, not because they were contrite for their faults but because they were afraid our Lord would reveal them.

Covered with confusion, seeing that their conduct was known to him whom they wanted to pursue through their malice, all of them withdrew. Each one was disturbed on his own account without taking the time to examine or pay attention to his companions; each one thinking, no doubt, that our Lord meant him, all left 'one after another'. The evangelist remarks that the oldest were the first to leave, because they were more embarrassed than the young ones. They left so hastily that when our Lord sat upright not one of them remained, and he was alone with the woman standing in the midst of the crowd.

10. *Erigens autem se Jesus, dixit ei:  
Mulier, ubi sunt qui te accusabant?  
nemo te condemnavit?*

10. *Jesus looked up and said to her,  
"Woman, where are they? Has no  
one condemned you?"*

This was extraordinary! The unfortunate scribes and Pharisees were militantly zealous to condemn the woman for her sin, but at the same time they themselves – at least the greater number of them – were more guilty than she; all had committed as much evil and yet they wanted to be looked on as good-living. But if we examine their conduct closely, it will not seem so extraordinary. Many even today who harass and condemn people who are guilty of sin are themselves sometimes more guilty either of the same fault or of other kinds of numerous sins. It even commonly happens that wicked people, full of faults and covered with sins, are excessively severe towards others and rigorous in pursuing



evil in others. Or at least if they do not pursue them they commit another fault, namely, neglecting to work for the glory of God and the good of their neighbour. Or, fearing the evil that others could do them, they are severe in speaking of them, condemning them bitterly and using harsh language about them in their absence. Good, genuine Christians are always more inclined to practise indulgence and to spare, whereas the wicked manifest their wickedness.

Sometimes those who are imperfect and who lead a natural life full of self-love have the same attitude as the wicked ones, especially if they have some appearance of regularity in their conduct. And what happens in these circumstances? Very often what happened in the Gospel story; the guilty repent and are converted, they receive pardon for their faults and afterwards behave better; on the contrary, the evil tongues still continue to recount the past deeds of others. The day of judgment will come when those who have been guilty will be saved through divine mercy, and those who liked to appear as just will be condemned by divine justice that will bear down on them. What a sad condition for souls who want to be hard on others but not on themselves. Our divine Master did not act that way. He took all our sins upon himself and chose to have rigorous justice applied to himself by his heavenly Father. But when it was a question of the truly guilty he had nothing but mercy. All who belong to Jesus will tread most carefully in his footsteps in this matter.

11. *Quae dixit: Nemo, Domine.  
Dixit autem Jesus: Nec ego  
condemnabo; vade, et jam  
amplius noli peccare.*

11. *She said, "No one, Lord." And  
Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn  
you; go, and do not sin again."*

After our Lord had made the poor sinful woman feel the great grace he had given her by confounding her accusers, he told her, now contrite and humiliated, that neither would he condemn her. He did not precisely say that her sin was already forgiven but he gave her hope. He offered her his mercy on the condition that she

would change her life. 'Go' and have no more fears, and sin no more.

*Jesus, the Light of the World*

12. *Iterum ergo locutus est eis Jesus, dicens: Ego sum lux mundi: qui sequitur me, non ambulat in tenebris, sed habebit lumen vitae.*

12. *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Our Lord finished this episode of the adulterous woman. He now continued his discourse and began once more to instruct the people about his adorable Person. He possibly said the next words in reference to the Pharisees' blindness, who were in great darkness because of their unbelief. 'I am the light of the world'. Our Lord speaks here of the spiritual and supernatural light of the soul. He compares himself to the material light which gives us material enlightenment upon earth. He is the light of the world. Material light produces two effects in order that we may see: it casts its rays on the objects we have to see, and at the same time that same ray enters our eye. If there were light only on the objects and if the rays that fall on them did not take in our eyes, we could not see, for we would be blind. And if the rays came only into our eyes, then the light that enlightens us would be dull and would only serve to give us the satisfaction of not being blind. But the ray which enlightens both our eyes and the objects that surround us in all their detail: that is perfect light in the material order.

Now the light our Lord gives in the spiritual order is something like that, in a high degree of perfection. The divine light begins by shedding great brightness into the spiritual eye of our soul, a heavenly clarity which is delightful. This is already a grace, a merciful gift inexpressibly beyond anything we deserve. But this divine light does more; it enlightens us about all things and admirably brings all its perfections together in us. It gives us knowledge of God, ourselves and other creatures.

1) It lets us know God, what he is in himself, to the extent that the weakness of our spiritual vision is able to bear it; what he is in his perfections, greatness, power, immensity, eternity; what he is for us, his goodness, mercy, justice, and all the other perfections he shows us; what he is in his mysteries, especially in those of his Incarnate Word upon earth; what he is as imparting his graces, and so on.

2) It lets us know what we are in ourselves: our poverty, wretchedness, sin, uselessness regarding all things, our nothingness; what we are before God, the obligations we have towards him, our duties and how to fulfil them, all the other things we must expect from him, for which we should strive.

3) It casts light upon earthly objects: it shows us the value of the world we have left, what the earthly riches, the pleasures and vanities of this world are; it shows us what God's will is in every circumstance, what works are good and what evil; it lets us discern what is useful and what is harmful to our soul. And so, in all the circumstances of our life, in all our works, in all our dealings with things outside ourselves, and in everything present in us, this divine light enlightens us about everything and enables us to judge things as they are in themselves and in relation to God and ourselves. This is what St Paul says: 'the spiritual person judges everything'. Earthly-minded and unspiritual people, who do not possess this light, as well as those who, though good, fail to judge everything by this divine light and do not follow our Lord – as we will see later – all these frequently think that the one who judges by the divine light judges wrongly. They look down on such people as unenlightened. But on the great day when the divine light will appear to the eyes of all, to divide and separate what is light from what is not, these critics will see their errors. All the good who had accepted to be led by the light will adore the designs of God, who hid these things because of their faults and imperfections. They will rejoice that God chose for his servants simple persons who shunned worldly views, and revealed the light to them more fully than to the others. 'I thank you, Father,

because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to little ones'.

Nevertheless those good people who realize that they are far from following our Lord in the perfection of his divine love must practise more restraint than they usually do in this world in judging and condemning those whom they recognize as servants of God more perfect than themselves. It is true that it is in God's designs to let his most faithful friends be persecuted by the good, but those who condemn and persecute them, influenced by the spirit of the world and human prudence, act in a way that displeases God and will be punished. As for the wicked and the worldly, when the light appears on that great day, they will see their error, they will tremble and grind their teeth, but there will be no going back. It is because of this great light that our Lord spreads not only on souls but on everything that he is called 'the light of the world'. He is the light of the whole spiritual world, he enlightens it through and through.

'He who follows me will not walk in darkness'. Those who do not welcome our Lord's light walk in darkness. Our soul is for spiritual light as our eyes are for physical light. By itself our bodily eye is without light and is absolutely incapable of seeing anything if no light penetrates it. Our soul, likewise, in and by itself is dark. In it, as in our bodily eye, there is a disposition to receive the light, which does not dwell in it. That is why the soul has to receive the light from the great spiritual sun in which the Father has placed an immense furnace of light, his adorable Word. If the soul does not receive the rays of this adorable light it remains therefore in its own darkness; in other words, there is a complete absence of all clarity about all the spiritual objects which should be its nourishment and its true life, and about its own authentic workings. Our Lord does not say that his followers will not be in darkness, but that they will not *walk* in darkness. By this he means, first of all, the soul's operation, and self direction in the conduct of its life and relations with God and objects outside of God. Just as bodily walking means going in a certain direction



relative to physical objects, either coming nearer to them or going away from them or changing one's position towards them, so does our Lord by analogy call walking that operation of the soul by which it goes away from or towards an object or changes its position.

The soul by itself is blind, unable to give itself proper direction. It walks like a blind person, not knowing the how or the wherefore. Its fate is that of every blind person. If it desires to avoid falls, it must walk cautiously and even then it goes off course. If it walks too confidently it will often fall; it only gropes its way, making false steps and suffering the other disadvantages of the blind. But if it is enlightened by the divine light, it walks with assurance and strength; it follows a clear direction. It sees the goal to aim at and walks straight to it. It sees and discerns the straightest way according to its particular position and follows it, striding spiritually along the road. It sees the obstacles, dangers and traps in its way and proceeds clearly and securely to avoid them. It sees all the detours to take, all the roads that might mislead it or cause it to stray from its direction; and in all this it follows the guidance of the divine light enlightening it. It walks safely in the midst of all these difficulties to reach its goal. Its progress is all the while enjoyable, since it is not in darkness. Secondly, by the word 'walk' our Lord also indicates a habit. It is not a question of one or several steps made by the soul, but the whole process, the whole conduct and direction of the active soul, in its relation with God, with other objects, or with itself. In all this it will not walk in darkness. It is a habit, a way of living of the soul in its whole conduct in general and in each particular action.

'But (he) will have the light of life'. This light is that of our Lord himself, whom the soul is following. It will dwell in the soul as a divine light and give value to all it does. 'And the life was the light of men. The light shines in darkness'. He says, 'the light of life', the brightness of our Lord, who is the life of all things. Its actions and attitudes will be enlightened by the same brightness

that came from the light to enlighten the sacred humanity. The soul will share in our Lord's light by following him.

'The light of life' which our Lord gives the soul could also be his divine light, which becomes a source of life to give it life. And this is in contrast to physical light, which gives nothing, and to the natural light of the human mind, which even wicked people and pagans have and which in no way gives life to the soul. Our Lord's not only fills and vivifies our mind but even gives strength and love to the will and animates, enlightens and vivifies the soul in all its activity. Finally, to express in a few words our Lord's magnificent promise in this place: the souls that follow our Lord will have wisdom, discretion and divine prudence to enlighten them habitually in their conduct, enabling them to judge things as God judges them and to do things and get them done as God wants. These are great virtues; they demand great perfection and produce great holiness in those who possess them; they also effect great things for God's glory in those around them. They are the virtues of the perfect. Hence our adorable divine Lord says this favour will be granted to those who follow him: 'he who follows me'. He does not say, those 'who believe in me', because that does not suffice for obtaining these great heavenly virtues.

Those who believe in our Lord by faith, cling to him by hope and tend towards him by love have this life. From the first moment the soul is in this state it has life; but in order to have this divine light it must follow him. Our soul must habitually possess holy union with him in all its works and in all circumstances. We must tend towards our Lord from the depths of our soul habitually and direct our life in general to him as much as our weakness allows. Our intellect must habitually – and of course to the extent of our capacity – see, examine and judge things in and through the light of our Lord while seeking him in all our activity. With suppleness and docility of mind we will receive the divine rays and be enlightened by them. We need perfect renunciation. We must be on our guard not to let our actions anticipate our union with our Lord and run ahead of the grace of light which we

are to receive. Our will must love our Lord alone, and as perfectly as possible, and have its savour, joy and satisfaction in him alone. Thus to follow our Lord demands forgetting and withdrawing entirely from every created object so as to act through each one of our powers only for him, through him and in him. In saying this we refer to a habitual way of acting. This will be interrupted from time to time and in varying degrees by contrary actions, the result of our extreme wretchedness and weakness.

Our soul thus gradually emerges from its darkness and acquires the habit of seeing and judging things by our Lord's light. It learns to distinguish the rays of divine light from the false light emanating from its mind. Moreover, as the mind is gradually purified more and more, our Lord's light also spreads more and more over the intellect, increasingly influencing it. As the mind gets the habit of not anticipating things and not acting on its own inspiration, the light of grace increases proportionately. Our soul may be compared to the moon. As long as the moon follows the sun, it is wholly illuminated by it. But as soon as another celestial body comes between sun and moon, the moon's light decreases and it ends up by becoming totally dark. Similarly our soul must always follow our Lord, its divine and brilliant sun, but as soon as it is preoccupied with some other object, as soon as it puts the earth between itself and its sun, it immediately grows dim, either partly or entirely, according to the amount of space the earthly object occupies in the soul's powers. So we must not act like the moon, but according to the power that is given us let us follow our adorable sun step by step. Let us so face him that his divine rays fall upon us in full and enlighten us throughout our progress.

It is not to be imagined, though, that the blessed souls which have acquired the habit of practising perfect self denial and union with their God so greatly enjoy the light that they never commit any fault and that there are never any clouds to prevent that light from enlightening them. These clouds come from time to time, more or less according to the perfection of self-denial and one's union with our Lord. For let us keep in mind that the clouds that

hide the sun's brilliant light come primarily from the earth itself. The same thing happens privileged souls: the clouds arise from within them, from the imperfections still in them. On that account they sometimes do not see things properly; sometimes in a passing way they make a mistake and are victims of an illusion. But if they continue to be faithful in following our Lord the error will pass and disappear, like passing clouds.

Note that the cloud which hides the clear light of the sun from the earth is unable to deprive it entirely of the influence of the heavenly body's light. Something similar happens in the imperfections and small faults of such persons, which prevent them from receiving the clear rays of the sun of life. These small defects do not hinder them from still receiving something.

It remains true, however, that such persons do not possess light without clouds, at least generally. That is why our Lord says: 'will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'. They will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life, which will be at their disposal to give them its brightness, that is, when no cloud obscures its fulness. And so souls that follow our Lord in the way we have explained above will never walk in darkness but will always have a fundamental reserve of light. This light will shed brilliancy on their works when they place no obstacles in the way by their imperfections and continue to follow our Lord; they will not turn their back on him, as the earth turns its back on the sun at night. They must always be turned towards our Lord and open to him, desiring to receive and draw down his light on their actions, and avoid acting self-reliantly without turning to him. All the saints we know acted that way; they also enjoyed great enlightenment in almost all their activities. If they sometimes made mistakes it was because some imperfection prevented them from receiving the perfect rays of light.

Note that our Lord says: 'he who follows', in the present, and 'does not walk', (RSV has 'will walk' – ed.) in the present, but, 'will have the light of life', in the future. We must begin by following the divine light, but we are not immediately enlightened by this



brilliant light. We only begin by not walking in darkness. By the very fact that we follow our Lord perfectly we are engaged in holy activity and at once are beginning to emerge from the darkness of a natural mentality. However, it is only after long practice of following our Lord that we receive the favour of possessing his divine light; that is why he says: 'he will have the light of life'.

There is another possible explanation of this passage, one which seems in fact to be closest to our Lord's intention. He was speaking to the Jews, who did not want to admit his mission, still less his divinity, and those who did admit it did so only imperfectly. He said that those who follow him, like his apostles and disciples, in order to listen to him, do believe and are faithful to his teaching, they will not walk in darkness, will not go astray, will not become slaves of sinful nature nor remain ignorant of divine things, but will possess the light of life in themselves. It is our Lord who will impart his light. He says: 'he shall have', because while our Lord lived on earth his disciples had not this brilliant light. They did not walk in darkness, since our Lord was enlightening them as much as he could and as much as the mysteries of his life permitted: 'for the Spirit had not yet been given', but once the Holy Spirit was given and the mysteries of our Lord had been accomplished, the apostles entered into full possession of the light and were able to use it in all circumstances.

Although the latter meaning seems far removed from the first, in reality the two are identical. It is the immediate meaning for the time the divine Saviour was living on earth. For then all who were following him were necessarily leaving everything behind and were constantly with him; 'to follow him' could be done visibly in the literal sense of the term. But since his Ascension, it is no longer possible to follow him in that visible way; we follow him only spiritually and in the way described above.

And the words 'shall have the light of life' have the same meaning, because for our time the same thing holds as for the apostles' time. As soon as a soul follows our Lord with the required dispositions, the divine promise is fulfilled as it was in

the apostles. In general the same thing is true of our Lord's words while he was still dwelling on earth. If we go deeply into their meaning, we shall always see that they are fulfilled in the future in the same way as they were accomplished then.

A remark is in order here for souls who strive with all their might for the highest perfection and do their very best to follow our Lord to the full extent of his holy love. They must be on their guard against misusing God's grace. Under the pretext of feeling secure and being fully confident in our Lord's light, they must not fall into presumption; they must avoid relying on their own judgment and activity, saying to themselves that they are acting by our Lord's light. Neither should they imagine that they know things better than others who do not tend to so high a perfection, nor compare themselves with them. They must avoid yielding to self-complacency in God's gift to them when they feel more elated than formerly. Finally they must not give way to a merely natural boldness in acting and making pronouncements.

These are precisely the means the demon uses to stir up those opaque clouds that threaten to bring about the downfall of unfaithful souls. They must always maintain great interior lowliness before God and people, humbling themselves; they must be on guard against sentiments of self-esteem and self-complacency. When they notice that unfavourable judgments arise in their minds about others, especially about the way they see divine things, they must take care. Their care must even be greater, as well as the grounds for self-humiliation, when these judgments are based on comparisons between themselves and others; when such ideas come frequently into their minds they are in positive and proximate danger of sinning.

The supreme rule for all souls that desire to live for Jesus, our most humble Saviour, is to have a low opinion of themselves and great esteem for others. Moreover they must form a strong habit of never considering our Lord's graces within themselves. Their mind in a general way must tend toward the divine Master, love him constantly, particularly in every action please him, be

---

acceptable to him in every activity and do everything in holy love. Their spirit must not run after those lights nor seek them, but tend simply towards our Lord with love. 'He who follows me' he said; we have merely to follow him – this is our whole concern, the rest is his.

*A Discussion on the Testimony of Jesus to Himself*

13. *Dixerunt ergo ei Phariseae: Tu de teipso testimonium perhibes. Testimonium tuum non est verum.*

13. *The Pharisees then said to him, "You are bearing witness to yourself; your witness is not true."*

When the Pharisees heard our Lord say he was the light of the world, and the rest of his words, they desired to resist through pure malice but, unable to confound and trick him, at least they tried to provoke him and prevent the people from believing in him. They said that no one is a witness in his own cause and that anyone who testifies for himself is not a truthful witness for those who listen to him, since such testimony brings no more certainty than before. Those among the Jews who thought our Lord could say these things about himself although they were not true evinced that they had absolutely no faith. But those who expressed their impious thought before a large multitude exhibited great malice, great hatred and the desire to lower him in the minds of the people.

14. *Respondit Jesus, et dixit eis: Et si ego testimonium perhibeo de meipso, verum est testimonium meum; quia scio unde veni, et quo vado; vos autem nescitis unde venio, aut quo vado.*

14. *Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness to myself my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going, but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going."*

We see the unfortunate condition of those who misuse God's graces maliciously, how terrible is this sin against the

Holy Spirit, and how rigorously punished it is already in this world. In chapter five our Lord at the beginning of his mission had explained things at length to show and prove that his testimony was true. He had the incomprehensible kindness of almost constructing a thesis to prove it; he quoted the testimony of his miracles and finally the testimony of Moses. Here he speaks only in an enigmatic way, he says only things these unfortunate people could not understand; it was a just and terrible punishment for their abominable malice.

The testimony the Pharisees said was untrue was the statement: 'I am the light of the world'. Now this is said by the Word, the Son of God, who is the Light of the world and enlightens everyone who follows the sacred humanity. Therefore when our Lord answers them here that his testimony is true, it is still the Word, the Son of God, who speaks and who says: If I give testimony of myself, my testimony is a testimony which is true for all who hear me, and they are obliged to believe, even if they know only my testimony, because I know where I came from – that is, I know that I came from the bosom of my Father, and I know where I am going – that is, into the bosom of my Father'. Our Lord wants to speak in this way about his divinity, in which his humanity shares; his testimony is the most authentic and credible possible.

By his answer our Lord means not only that in virtue of his being the Word of God is his testimony undeniably true, but also because he has sure knowledge of what he testifies to: he is the light of the world and those who follow him do not walk in darkness. That is why he uses the two expressions: 'whence I have come from', and 'whither I am going'. The first expression would be enough to show that everyone is obliged to submit to his testimony.

He says that he knows where he came from when he entered this world, namely, from the bosom of the Father. He knows for certain that he is the Son, therefore the eternal light of the Father. Having come into this world he is therefore the light of the world.



He knows where he is going, that is, directly to his heavenly Father, to reenter into the glory that was his from all eternity. Therefore all who follow him will not walk in darkness; they will not walk on a dark uncertain road and their steps will not be groping, for when they follow the light it will lead them directly along the perfectly sure road taken by himself, to arrive at the goal and end of all their existence. Our Lord says: 'I know where I came from', in the past, because he was speaking of his Incarnation, by which he came into this world to be the light of the world; and 'whither I am going', in the present and not in the future, because our Lord's whole life on earth was a journey by which he was coming ever nearer to his Father's bosom. And he progressed by accomplishing the mysteries he had to fulfil and carrying out the works his Father had committed to him.

All people must likewise consider their life as a journey along a road which leads them to the holy city of the heavenly Jerusalem. And on this road they must follow their adorable light, they must realize that they do not make progress by the years which pass but by doing God's will in being faithful to the graces given them and by participating in our Lord's different mysteries. In advancing thus from mystery to mystery, from grace to grace, from one thing willed by God to another, they will take that many steps on the road the divine model followed to lead them in brightness and assurance to the bosom of their heavenly Father. Like him they also must in everything, everywhere and always, bend their steps towards their heavenly Father: 'I go'. 'But you do not know...' Our Lord shows that his testimony is true and that if they refuse to accept it, if they blaspheme against him, it is because they do not know where he came from nor where he is going. He reproaches them for it, it is their fault; had they wanted to, they could have known him.

15. *Vos secundum carnem judicatis;  
ego non judico quemquam.*

15. *You judge according to  
the flesh, I judge no one.*

'You judge according to the flesh'. Every time people set themselves up as judges of intellectual things, especially divine things, their judgement is very uncertain, since all are subject to prejudice and certain passions which make them lean one way or another; hence they do not judge according to the truth and their judgment is not true, for a just judgment must be rigorously just and rooted in justice. But when the passions are strong and strongly influence a judgment, then not only is balance of justice upset but the judge becomes blind about the object of his judgment, according to the words Moses expressed in Deuteronomy: 'a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous' (16:19). They blind and then change.

These are the two effects of strong passions; and if the passion is not extremely strong, at least one is always prone to the second evil: he is changed. This is what our Lord said to the Pharisees. They judged him and his words, saying his testimony was not true, using a legal term Moses had used. Our Lord replied, saying that they did not know the object they judged, since they were judging him according to the flesh, that is, inspired by their passions and prejudices; that is why they did not judge him according to justice. In fact they were ignorant of justice and therefore their judgment about his testimony was not a just judgment. Furthermore, since the Pharisees saw in our Lord only an ordinary man who claimed to be sent by God, they could say to him: 'But you also judge us, saying that we do not know where you come from and where you are going, and you judge us also through prejudice, because we are opposed to your word'. So our Lord answers before they utter the objection: 'I judge no one'. The individual and ordinary person such as you see in me does not judge anyone; his judgments do not proceed solely from a human being, hence it is not merely from the standard of the flesh that I judge.

16. *Et si judico ego, judicium meum  
verum est, quia solus non sum:  
sed ego, et qui misit me, Pater.*

16. *Yet even if I do judge, my  
judgment is true, for it is not  
I alone that judge but I and  
he that sent me.*

And if you see me pronouncing a judgment against you it is true, unlike your own judgments, because I am not alone in judging. It is not on the basis of my human nature that I pronounce judgment; it is my Father who is its source and principle.

He it is who has given me the office of judging all creatures. And when I judge, I use justice itself. Therefore my judgment is true, which means it is in accord with what rigorously constitutes justice. For a judgment is true when a thing is judged in virtue of the true principle of justice.

Our Lord speaks here in the name of his sacred humanity. He does not say that he does not judge alone and that the Word is with him to judge since the difficulty here was not about knowing about the object he judges. (Then he would have said that the Word is in his humanity, to show that he is the light.) But it was a question of conformity to justice rather than to human prejudices and interests, and so he invokes the attribute of essential justice, which is in the Father, and says that he is not alone but possesses by the Word that attribute of the Father.

17. *Et in lege vestra scriptum est,  
quia duorum hominum testimonium  
verum est.*

17. *In your law it is written that the  
testimony of two men is true;*

18. *Ego sum qui testimonium  
perhibeo de meipso, et  
testimonium perhibet de me,  
qui misit me, Pater.*

18. *I bear witness to myself, and the  
Father who sent me bears witness  
to me."*

After speaking of his own just judgment, he spoke of his testimony, saying it was not only true and self-sufficient but also legal, in accord with Moses. Moses asked for only two witnesses

---

to establish the truth of something, and in the present case the Pharisees had the testimony of two witnesses, both of them infinitely respectable and credible: namely, our Lord, who gave testimony of himself, and his Father, who witnessed to him. If it was objected that according to the law of Moses no one could be a witness for himself, this was because testimony for one's self is inevitably self-interested – a judgment 'according to the flesh'; therefore it would not guarantee the truth. Now our Lord had just shown that his witness was not 'according to the flesh'. Here was not someone who by himself alone had been able to recognize the object he was judging; besides, his testimony was not according to himself alone but according to justice; he was therefore a true witness.

Only one difficulty remained: it was not legal to have only one witness. Thus our Lord also quotes the testimony of his Father, who had sent him. And so he has shown now that his testimony was good and true in itself; if it was rejected by the Pharisees, if they did not recognize its truthfulness, it was their own fault. They were judging everything according to the flesh. That is why they were unable to shed their ignorance and recognize the witnesses who might be talking to them. Our Lord would soon have done with telling them these things. He was satisfied with speaking to them that way and did not want to repeat the external proofs for the truth of his testimony, nor did he tell them what his Father's testimony was. He left them in their great ignorance because they were so malicious; they had misused all his graces and blessings, only employing them against him.

19. *Dicebant ergo ei: Ubi est Pater tuus? Respondit Jesus: neque me scitis, neque Patrem meum; si me sciretis, forsitan et Patrem meum sciretis.*

19. *They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also."*



The Pharisees, hearing our Lord say that his Father was giving testimony to him, did not understand whom he was speaking about. So they asked him where his Father was. Perhaps they also suspected that he was speaking of God; and they wanted to hear him say that himself, which would give them a good reason to seek his condemnation. But it was obvious they had no clear ideas about this, so our Lord said: 'you neither know me, nor know my Father'. He was speaking here of a simple notion of the Incarnation of the divinity and of the mystery of the blessed Trinity: Neither do you know me. You do not know that the divinity resides in me. You see only the man. Neither do you know my Father. But he does not wish to speak here about that intimate knowledge which the Holy Spirit imprints in a soul who has progressed to perfection in the faith, nor about the profound vivifying knowledge he gives to such a soul about the Word begotten by the Father and incarnate in the sacred humanity. It was about this latter knowledge that our Lord spoke on the eve of his Passion, with much more force and certitude: 'Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father'. Here he only says: 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also'.

He puts it in the form of a problem because here he is speaking of the notion rigorously necessary for the first degree of faith. Knowledge of the Incarnation of the divinity did not in a Jew demand knowledge of the Blessed Trinity nor of the existence of the Father and generation of the Son. For the prophets who proclaimed the Incarnation, and the tradition which preserved the memory of the promise that had been made so many times, did not express themselves so clearly that one could conclude to the existence of the Father and the eternal generation of the Son. And the Jew who saw the fulfilment of all the prophecies about the Messiah in the person of our Lord, and who believed that he truly was the Messiah, needed to be instructed in this great mystery by the Messiah himself. The traditions proclaimed that the Messiah would instruct them about everything, as the Samaritan woman said: 'When the Messiah comes, he will tell us all things'. That is why, besides the first grace of faith in our Lord as a God-man and

Messiah, a second grace was necessary, namely, that of being faithful and docile to his instructions, of becoming a child in order to listen to him and believe everything.

Now the pride and malice the Pharisees had to overcome were so great an obstacle in the way of blind faith that it was still very uncertain whether they would have persevered in the faith and believed in our Lord's words, even if they knew and believed that he was the Messiah, the God-man proclaimed by the prophets. So our Lord said: 'perhaps'.

20. *Haec verba locutus est Jesus  
in gazophylacio, docens in templo:  
et nemo apprehendit eum, quia  
necdum venerat hora ejus.*

20. *These words he spoke  
in the treasury, as he  
taught in the temple; but no  
one arrested him, because his  
hour had not yet come.*

Although Jesus preached his doctrine publicly in the temple, and although he spoke these things to the Pharisees, who should have understood that he was speaking of God when mentioning his Father, and this in a place where they could easily understand him, no one, in spite of all that, touched him, 'because his hour had not yet come'. The evangelist, who frequently repeats this wants to make it clear that if, later on, Jesus is arrested by the Jews, chained and most shamefully treated, it was not through weakness that he allowed them but on the contrary because of his strength. No one was able to touch him although he did not manifest his power: the reason was 'that his hour had not yet come'. Permission was necessary. He gave that permission when his Father willed it, that is, when the hour determined from all eternity arrived.

### *The Unbelieving Jews Warned*

21. *Dixit ergo iterum eis Jesus:  
Ego vado, et quaeritis me, et in  
peccato vestro moriemini. Quo ego  
vado, vos non potestis venire.*

21. *Again he said to them, "I go  
away, and you will seek me and  
die in your sin; where I am  
going you cannot come."*

Jesus was still full of compassion for these unfortunate people, whom he saw becoming more and more hardened, whose conversion was prevented by their malice. So he said he was leaving and that they would seek him later without being able to find him.

He gave them a warning which he often repeated, to draw their attention to their behaviour, and to use what little time he still had among them. Here he says more than before. That 'seeking' of the Pharisees ('You will seek me') was not directed to his person. He predicted that they would seek the Messiah, which was himself, but while seeking him they would die in their sin because they would not find him, and they could not be saved without him; for 'where I go you cannot come'. It is through him alone they must go; by rejecting him, the Pharisees were rejecting their only hope of being rid of their sins and being saved. In this sense the words 'you will die in your sin' mean: you will die in your sins, which will not be remitted; since I alone can remit them. He says 'sin' in the singular, because their whole life was sinful, pride was the principle of all their actions. Or our Lord may be speaking of original sin, which is the source of all sins; and since our Lord came original sin can be remitted only by faith in him and Baptism. But for those who believed in him and were baptized, original sin and all other sins were remitted by the same act. Nevertheless, 'your sin' here seems to mean a particular sin of the Pharisees. Another meaning: 'You will see me when I shall no longer be with you, but you will die in your sins, that is, in the sin of having rejected the Son of God, of having persecuted him, despised and crucified him. I shall be in the bosom of my Father, but you, sinners, who have rejected me, you will not be there, because no one can go there except through me'.

22. *Dicebant ergo Judaei: Numquid interficiet semetipsum, quia dixit: Quo ego vado, vos non potestis venire?*

22. *Then said the Jews, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'where I am going, you cannot come'?"*

The Jews, still incredulous – even those who had the faith had it weak and dark – did not understand what our Lord had just said, and precisely from their lack of faith made strange conjectures about his words. They imagined that he might mean to commit suicide. Since he knew the Pharisees wanted to do away with him, he would inflict death upon himself and so evade torture! This, then, was the meaning: 'You will seek me to inflict death upon me, but you will not find me because I shall be dead'. It shows how vulgar were their ideas about divine things, how little they knew our adorable Master and how little they understood his words, which in reality revealed his greatness. That is why he said: 'you are from below'.

23. *Dicebat ergo eis: Vos de deorsum estis, ego de supernis sum. Vos de hoc mundo estis, ego non sum de hoc mundo.* 23. *He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."*

Our Lord spoke in heavenly terms, which they interpreted vulgarly in accord with their low mean ideas. Their souls were half brutalized by sin and the flesh, unable to grasp heavenly things. Our Lord spoke about going to the bosom of his Father and they attributed unworthy sentiments to him. This very often happened them because our Lord unceasingly dwelt in his Father, and his human mind was constantly lifted up and engulfed in his Father's greatness, whereas the mentality of these unbelieving Jews was narrow, vulgar, and unfit to cope with heavenly realities; their minds were constantly stooping to lower things. When a soul is in sin, the mind is weighted towards the low and vulgar and cannot rise. 'You are of this world'. Our adorable Saviour, in chapter 17, says to his Father that his apostles are not of this world (Jn 17:14) but here he says the opposite about the Pharisees. A person who is intimately united and attached to our Lord by perfect faith is not of this world, because his soul and all his powers, all his affections, all his activity and his whole existence are in heaven. Such a one ceaselessly tends heavenwards through



hope; he is truly there mentally through faith and he has the enjoyment of it through charity. Such a one is in the world through his body: 'they are in the world; I do not say that you take them out of the world' (Jn 17:11-15), but he is not of this world through his soul.

The following people are of the world: those whose souls delight only in earthly things and are concerned with them alone; those who, instead of living in union with God through holy virtues, identify with creatures, following the three concupiscences; those who, instead of constantly tending Godwards through hope – God being the only object of present and future glory – tend only towards vulgar wretched things through the concupiscence of pride; they foolishly imagine that such things will serve to uplift them, satisfying their self-love and silly vanity; such persons are of the world.

So are those who refuse to give themselves wholly to their Creator, to be possessed by him, and possess him and his wealth of graces, and later possess his glory – through faith in this world and through perfect possession in the next; these concentrate on searching for and holding onto earthly goods. People are also of the world who refuse to place all their love, contentment and satisfaction in God alone through perfect charity, who apply their will only to the love of earthly pleasures and satisfactions. These are of the world because their souls are identified with earth and objects of the earth. They are possessed, dominated and wholly obsessed with earthly things.

This precisely was the Jews' situation. They were immersed in earthly things; their minds saw and judged things according to the earth. Our Lord, on the contrary, was not of this world but was wholly in heaven. He spoke only of heavenly things, which meant his words were often unintelligible to the Jews. This is what our divine Master said here on the occasion of their vulgar interpretation of his words. This was fundamental and at the same time it served to explain the following verse.

24. *Dixi ergo vobis quia moriemini  
in peccatis vestris; si enim non  
credideritis quia ego sum, moriemini  
in peccato vestro.*

24. *I told you that you would die  
in your sins, for you will die in  
your sins, unless you believe that  
I am he."*

The Jews still paid more attention to what excited their curiosity than to what should have impressed and touched them. And throughout history a great number of people resembled them and acted the same way. They scrutinized what the phrase, 'where I am going you cannot come', might mean. But the words that should have impressed them, 'you will die in your sins', did not bother them in the least. Our Lord nevertheless came back to them in order to emphasize them. But to touch a soul that has no faith and does not want to have faith is very rare. After telling them that they were from below, of the world, sinful, he said that that was why he announced they would die in their sins. In order to get out of their sinfulness they had to believe in his divinity. Since they rejected him and would not find him after his death, on that account they would die in their sin.

Note that our Lord says: 'If you do not believe that I am he', rather than, 'If you do not believe in me', because the issue here is the remission of sins through Baptism, where a lesser degree of faith suffices.

By 'sins' in the plural, which our Lord uses first in this verse, he means all the sins of their life. They will remain covered by these sins and die in them, because there is no way of having them remitted. And when at the end he says 'in sin', in the singular, he means either their whole life of sin, or original sin in itself and in all its consequences, that is, in all other sins, of which original sin is the source; or it may mean this last sin of rejecting the Son of God and not believing in him. In this last sense, the word 'in' means 'in consequence of': you will die in this sin; it will be the sin which will consummate your loss and lead you to your grave weighed down with all the other sins.

In this interpretation it becomes perfectly understandable why our Lord at the beginning of this verse said, 'in sins' and at the end

---

‘in sin’. ‘I am’: Our Lord will explain the depth of these words in the following verse.

25. *Dicebant ergo ei: Tu quis es? Dixit eis Jesus: principium, qui et loquor vobis.*

25. *They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Even what I have told you from the beginning.*

The ignorance and boldness of the Jews of that time is revealed here. When it came to delivering them from Egypt, they were gross, ignorant and perverse, as is clear throughout their history. Yet when God wished to manifest himself through his servant, he said to them: Tell them, ‘he who will be’ has sent me: ‘I am has sent me’ (cf. Ex 3:14), and they will believe you. Here we are dealing with deliverance from an incomparably harder and more unfortunate slavery than that of Egypt, the slavery of the demons, which was moderately prefigured by that of Egypt.

In place of a servant he sends the very one that had been promised to the Jews of Egypt, his beloved Son, the eternal Son of the Father. Coming to them now he repeats those same words, ‘I am’, and no one believes him. Moses, as a servant, had orders to work a small number of miracles for them, weak and of little consequence; they were intended to prefigure the great deliverance. Now the great deliverance had arrived; the Son had appeared. He inundated them with miracles and said, ‘I am’, and no one believed. Hence he said that they would die in their sin. The Jews did not even understand the meaning of ‘I am’, so far were they removed from faith and truth, and so they asked, ‘Who are you?’. This is the same question as Pharaoh’s, ‘Who is the Lord that I may obey him?’ (Ex 5:2). The Jews said, ‘Who are you, that we may believe you?’ He answered, ‘the beginning’. He had just said, ‘I am’. The Jews wanted to know what he was. He gave them the explanation of the two words, ‘I am’, saying that he is the beginning having neither start nor finish, existing through himself and in himself, having received being from no outside source.

That is how he is the beginning in himself and by himself. He is also the beginning of all created existence, the beginning of the order of nature. All creatures come from him: 'all things were made by him' (Jn 1:3); and elsewhere, 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth'. (Gen 1:1) Moreover in the order of grace no regeneration is accomplished except by him: 'No one comes to the Father except by me' (Jn 14:6). And so this single word is a very thorough explanation of the whole preceding verse for, besides explaining the meaning of the words 'I am', it also says why those Jews would die in their sin for not believing in him.

Our Lord is the origin of all things even while in the bosom of his Father through the essential being of the Father, which he possesses exclusively in himself and by himself. He is the unique source of human beings' existence and life which they receive from him and through him alone. To bring out this truth he says: 'Who is speaking to you'. He who possesses being and life by sharing the same essence as his Father, imparts that being and life to us that he has in himself. This is expressed in the word 'speak'. In our human language we call 'word' the interchange between intellects (divine or angelic – ed.), by analogy with the transmission of ideas through ordinary human speech. Thus St Paul says: 'If I had the language of angels' (1 Cor 13:1). The angels have no mouths or tongues or idiom to express themselves, but they are able to make known divine wonders, and this is a language.

The eternal Son of the Father is called the Father's Word. And this is the most perfect word that can be conceived, for it contains perfect communication of the whole divine being, so that there is nothing in the Father which is not in the Son, and nothing in the Son which is not in the Father, except the quality of Father and of Son. The Father communicates and the Son receives, but the one is as perfect as the other; both enjoy one same and only perfection, because that communication is essential and belongs to the nature of the divinity. Similarly, when the Word of God wants to communicate to human beings the life he possesses essentially in his Father's bosom he uses words. He makes use of a human mouth, so that the words he utters by his adorable mouth are emanations and communications of the Word. They are spirit and



life, as our Lord said: 'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (J 6:64).

But the Son of God talked to them in vain. They resisted all his divine messages rejecting them precisely for the reason eternal Wisdom had said, namely, that they were people of the world, who received only what was transmitted to them by the prince of this world, the devil. For, although all the earth and all it contains belong to God, nevertheless, because of the authority people give to that despicable enemy of God through their sins, they, as it were, give him dominion over all God's creatures, to poison all their use and to make of them an occasion for their fall and loss. For it is clear that the whole earth belongs to God: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof' (Ps 23:1) but he has given its use to people, as well as all that is in the earth. Now human beings having sinned and fallen under the devil's power made him master of their soul and body and everything they possess. Since then, the enemy has power to tempt by means of those objects and he can especially tempt the worldly person, who is always subjected to him and to whom he makes worldly suggestions and gives worldly ideas. This was the condition of the Pharisees, who were totally given to the world and accepted its messages but rejected those of the Son of God, who is opposed to the influences of this world.

26. *Multa habeo de vobis loqui  
judicare: sed qui me misit, verax  
est; et ego quae audiui ab eo, haec  
loquor in mundo.*

26. *I have much to say about you and  
much to judge; but he who sent  
me is true and I declare to  
the world what I have heard  
from him."*

Our Lord had just told the Jews, in an enigmatical general way, what the source of their ills was; he condemned their life and actions in general. What a grace for them if our Lord had gone into a detailed description of their conduct, describing their life in all its particulars, all their temptations and dangers and all the rest, to show them that they were on the road to perdition; if he had

publicly judged all their faults, showing the evil sources from which they sprang, all their illusions rooted in pride, by which they were delivered to the devil and being led to their destruction. But instead of giving them that grace our Lord chose to speak only in a general way: 'you will die in your sin'. The reason is that he would give his graces, say anything, perform any action, only as determined by the eternal will and decision of his Father, who destined for each action and circumstance what his Son was to do in time. This our Lord fulfilled perfectly. That is the meaning of his words; he had just said he was the 'beginning' who was speaking, which meant that he was imparting the light he possessed in himself and the life: light, so as to know oneself and the heavenly Father's wishes; and life, to carry them out. He added that there were still many other things to say about them and about God's will, which they were obliged to accomplish. He added, 'to judge'. He not only has things to say but he has to judge the evil in them and their opposition to his Father's divine will: Our Lord here speaks of a judgment pronounced and made known to the guilty; as for what was in people's hearts, our Lord judged each one of their evil works but did not divulge the judgments.

But whatever his desire for the salvation of souls, our Lord refrained from saying anything more, and did not make his judgment known to them, for the one who had sent him is true. God's veracity applies to his eternal decisions as well as to his promises and judgment. The Father decreed from all eternity in his sovereign will to send his Son upon earth and he did so. He determined everything the Son would do for the salvation of the world in general and for the salvation of each individual in particular. All his works were counted in that eternal will. He determined all the words of grace he was to say to the Pharisees, considering the circumstances of their malice. His veracity also demands that when the foreseen circumstances present themselves, the same will should hold good in time and be intimated to the Son of God. This means that when the particular

---

circumstances are present the Father cannot change in time what he willed from all eternity, either to grant more or grant less, because otherwise he would fail in his veracity, which is a rigorous standard of measurement willed from all eternity. Human beings can will one thing today and another tomorrow without wanting in veracity, because they are inconstant and what they willed yesterday they may not want today and yesterday's choice is not today's. But God's will cannot change; his volitions are set once and for all. Consequently he would be wanting in veracity if he could add to or subtract from what he had once decided; and if his decision is conditional, once the condition is fulfilled he has to act as was determined.

This is what our Lord says here: his Father from all eternity had definite plans about everything his Son was to say on earth. His Father had determined that he would not reveal to the Pharisees all the evils they were guilty of nor all God's judgments on them. Hence after the Father had sent his Son into our history he had to persevere in what he had willed. 'He who sent me is truthful'. He had this will from all eternity before the mission was actualized in time. And because of this truthfulness he wills the same thing now that the mission is accomplished, now that the Father's will is carried out. He is 'truthful' in his mission.

To complete the reason for saying all he could have said our Lord added: 'And I', and so on. 'My Father is true and perseveres always in the same will, and I, who have been sent by him to accomplish his eternal will, communicate graces and speak words in this world only as I have received them from all eternity from the Father. This occurred through my sharing in the divine will as in the other qualities of that same divine essence which is mine as well as the Father's.

Our Lord used the past tense when he said 'which I have heard', though he had always heard these things in that eternal listening which he does by reason of his sharing in the divine essence. In other words he had, in fact, heard all these things from all eternity – even before the Incarnation. If Our Lord says: 'from

him', this does not mean that he is in some way separate from God, or that this divine will no longer existed in the Father but had passed over to the Son. The Son shares in the divine will as he shares in the full divine nature. This same divine nature remains essentially and substantially in the Father – as it does in the Son. This identity (of nature – ed.) constitutes the unity between Father and Son.

Our divine Master says; 'the things I have heard from him, these I speak in the world'. He does not say: 'these I judge' because it is only a question of expressing in words what has been judged; the interior judgment will always remain. Every time evil is done there is a condemnation or judgment emanating from the Word of God united to the Son of Man. When grace triumphs and the soul returns to the Lord, the judgment or condemnation is erased. This is 'the handwriting of the decree' that St. Paul speaks of (Col 2:14); this our Lord erases and tears up by the merits of his cross. Here the words, 'what I have heard', have not exactly the same meaning as in chapter 5, verse 30: 'as I hear I judge', because that means pronouncing a judgment for the good of all souls. But this text is about an interior judgment pronounced by our Lord, who is just, for he judges according to what he hears from his Father.

'In the world'. These explanations of the condition of souls and their judgment are not given here in this world equally to everyone for their salvation, but they will be in the next. There in the twinkling of an eye people will be shown everything that was good and bad in them during their whole life in the greatest detail; and judgment will be pronounced on everything bad. But this judgment will no longer be one of mercy as it was on earth, it will be a terrible judgment to crush and overwhelm sinners. We might also say that our Lord while on earth refrained from saying these things because his Father willed it thus. But once he leaves our world his grace will be more powerful and then he will instruct the world more than he did when living in it.



27. *Et non cognoverunt quia Patrem ejus dicebat Deum.*

27. *They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father.*

28. *Dixit ergo eis Jesus: Cum exaltaveritis Filium hominis, tunc cognoscetis quia ego sum, et a meipso facio nihil; sed sicut docuit me Pater, haec loquor.*

28. *So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me.*

The Jews did not understand that he called himself the Son of God, they did not understand the word 'origin' any more than the words 'I am'. So they went on listening quietly while he addressed to them the words in verses 28 and 29, to make some impression on them and inspire them with some good sentiments, still leaving them in the great ignorance in which he saw them and in their inability to understand his divine words and come to know him. He consoled them in their ignorance and gave them hope that they would know him better later on. How incomprehensible is the wonderful goodness of our gentle Saviour! He knew they were too badly disposed to be told openly who he was; he spared them, using veiled terms; he drew them to himself at least for a while, so as to give them some graces, and told them that they would know him later on when the time came.

'When you shall have lifted up'. According to St Paul, eternal wisdom chose what was foolish according to the world to confound earthly wisdom (1 Cor 1:27). This is the way true wisdom and knowledge of the truth would have to come to the children of God. Through the weakness of his humanity our Lord overthrew all the power opposed to his reign in souls, by his ignominies he established his glory, but in the most splendid way. By his cross he would enlighten the world, crush the power of hell and draw all to himself.

All the mysteries the Son of God accomplished on earth were full of graces intended for human beings, not only for their salvation, but even for their progress in the greatest perfection of

holiness. Such are, for instance, the mysteries of his Incarnation, his interior life in Mary, his hidden life. These mysteries are full of the greatest graces for the contemplative and perfect life. Then there are the mysteries of living among people and his preaching, which contain supereminent graces of the apostolic spirit, and so on. But the effects these mysteries were to produce in souls were withheld throughout our Saviour's life on earth and there was little transmission of them because the mystery of the cross had first to be accomplished – a mystery which was to deliver us from death, free us from the dominion of the devil and from subjection to animal and earthly passions. After that would come the mystery of the Resurrection, to gain the grace for us of our Lord's divine life dwelling in our souls. 'He died for our sins and rose for our justification,' says St Paul (Rm 4:24). These mysteries once accomplished and applied to souls, as all the others would produce their graces.

Souls are like the Garden of Eden spoken of in Genesis. God planted all kinds of delightful plants; but before the rain fell, the plants did not grow and produce anything even though the seeds were there. So also our Lord by all the mysteries of his life on earth prepared wonderful plants to make them grow in souls. Before the first rain of his Passion comes down on the soul it remains sterile and no graces are produced; but once that rain falls, the rest takes place. A faithful soul keeps progressing from perfection to perfection and will have its share in all the mysteries worked in it by the Son of God.

So our Lord says to the Jews: 'When you shall have lifted up the Son of man, that is, on the cross then you will know that I am he'. He means they will recognize in him the divine Person of the Word, the Origin who is speaking to you. This he said meaning two things: first, those who are attracted by his Passion and receive its grace will know him by the supernatural lights of faith, for many among the Jews returned to him after his Passion. Secondly, as our divine Saviour through his grace draws the whole world to himself – 'I shall draw all things to myself' – the

Word's almighty power will fully manifest itself; for, by an act of weakness and ignominy which disheartened those who were attached to him, he would then attract even those who had opposed him.

Through the same mystery of the cross (in the same twofold sense) those who will be drawn to him, as well as those who remained faithful, will see that he did nothing of himself independently of his Father. Those who received salvation through the cross will have a share in the graces of the mysteries our Lord fulfilled throughout his life, and of the divine words he proclaimed. By the supernatural light of the Holy Spirit they will see, and by the impression of grace will feel, something divine in every action and word of their adorable Saviour. They will sense the activity of the Father in everything the Son said and did. The mystery of the cross itself will show the others the rigorous obedience of the Son of God – an obedience even unto the death of the cross – and the absolute dependence of his will, for they will see him drink the cup of sorrow to the dregs, not avoiding the least circumstance marked by his Father's will and foretold by the prophets. All the Jews had the obligation to see that and recognize him. If, after that, the greater number have not believed, it is because they have followed their illusions as a consequence of their malice, pride and resistance to divine grace.

It is therefore through the exaltation of the cross that our Lord made known to all who he is, the Son of God, and what the principle of his actions and words is, his heavenly Father.

But to understand this verse properly we must realize that it is the Word Incarnate who speaks; it is Jesus, both Son of God and Son of Mary. One part of the text is applicable to the Son of God, the rest to the Son of man; and whatever is said of the Son of God belongs to the Son of man; and whatever is said of the Son of man belongs to the Son of God, really and truly, through concomitance or through the coexistence of the two natures in Jesus Christ, in whom all these things exist.

The Jews had most confused ideas about the divine Saviour. They had not enough faith to accept his graces perfectly and be docile to his words, they wanted to understand before believing. That is why they could not bear to hear him say he was the Son of God; for they only saw a man like others. Although incomparably more perfect than any other man, he remained still a man in their eyes. To renounce their senses and submit to faith was something their vulgarity, vices and sins made them unable to do. To believe that this man was God they found impossible; they could not conceive the divinity and the sacred humanity forming one same Jesus Christ. That is why they could not grasp what our Lord was saying about himself, for these things sometimes related to his divinity and sometimes to his humanity.

But after the Crucifixion, when that great mystery of the faith had been revealed, then they understood all these different things and learned to refer them now to one nature, then to the other, as belonging always to the same Jesus Christ. It is in this vein that the divine Master speaks here: You do not know me and you do not understand me. When I speak to you of my Father you do not know who he is. When I tell you I am the principle you do not understand what I mean. When I speak to you about my mission you do not know what it is. You know me and want to see only the Son of man in me. When you have lifted up the Son of man (that is, when you have crucified him), then you will understand who I am (that is, as he had just explained in verse 25, the Origin of all things); you will learn to recognize in me the Person of the Son of God, who speaks to you, although it is a human mouth which proclaims these words. (Here now is a sentence that speaks of the divinity of the Word: 'You will know who I am', but these words are spoken by Jesus Christ, a man who is at the same time God); 'you will realise that I do nothing of myself'. (This refers to the Son of man like all the rest.) 'And so, when the Son of man does not express or explain at greater length the things you do not understand nor even those which concern you, that does not come from him; for I do nothing of myself, by my own will and my own



human judgment, but all that I say – all the words uttered before you by the Son of Man – are said, are uttered before you only according to the bidding of my Father; everything starts from there and nothing from anywhere else'. And this bidding of the Father is nothing other than the Father's essential wisdom in which all Our Lord's decisions arise.

Our Lord says: 'As the Father has taught me, these things I speak'. 'Has taught' in the past, through the eternal generation of the Word and his Incarnation, in which the Son of man has received that substantial and eternal bidding of the Father, 'as the Father has taught me'. The Word expresses himself through the sacred humanity in the manner, time and circumstances determined by the Father's eternal will. 'As' indicates the precise resemblance of the statements of the Word Incarnate to the eternal decisions that determine them. We see not a mere resemblance to someone perfectly fulfilling a command given by another when he adds: 'these I speak'. Here is no mere similarity but a substantial identity with the decisions of the Father, 'who is in me and in my words. These I speak: I speak that very thing which the Father teaches me'.

Here an important observation is in order. Our adorable Master shows us how devoutly we must ponder all the divine words he addresses to us, how much we must venerate and respect them with all adoration and love. Each discourse has its end and purpose; every sentence is weighed, measured and ordered to produce divine effects of clarification for the intelligence and love for the will; every word is in place, there is nothing useless or superfluous, no terms are vague or inexact. All flows from the Father's eternal wisdom. Clearly, our Lord says nothing that is not decreed, not a word produced exclusively by his own human mind. He receives all that he gives and he gives all that he received to give.

When human beings speak, however wise they may be, they can never calculate their words so exactly that every thought is expressed precisely as it should be. Nor can they render their

thoughts exactly as they ought to be rendered or render their thoughts with a minimum of words. There will always be circumlocutions and turns of phrase that are irrelevant. However concise a writer may be, this will always happen to some extent. It comes from the weakness of human intelligence. People lack a basic clarity for seeing things, they are incapable of the attention to detail that is required. But the word of God saw from all eternity in the bosom of his Father every action and word that he was to accomplish and say in the predetermined time; he so ordered his discourses, sentences and words with such wonderful wisdom that everything was simply the outcome of his Father's will, in perfect conformity with that adorable will, which guided their utterance and had decreed them from all eternity.

This must not be looked upon as a small point, for each word has a meaning, expresses a thought and is made to produce an effect on the senses and thereby on souls ('faith comes from what is heard' [Rm 10:17]). Now it is certain that the Father's will regulated from all eternity all the salvific thoughts and all the impressions that his Son was to produce in each of the souls he spoke to. How thoroughly then should we not plumb the depths of these divine words that issued from the mouth of the Word of God! How we should meditate on them in the Holy Spirit! We must not be satisfied with seeing a superficial meaning, as we do for human words, but we must enter into the fullest meaning of each word and take stock of it, in God's presence and in the Holy Spirit's light, in order to draw out the divine graces with which these holy words are filled. Anytime we do not penetrate them or cannot grasp them, we must be humble, admitting that we fail to understand a given passage perfectly. We must remain content with understanding however much we can of the words, unworthy as we are of the very privilege of reading them.

29. *Et qui me misit, mecum est et non reliquit me solum; quia ego quae placita sunt ei facio semper.*

29. *And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him."*

The divine Master has just told us who he is namely, the Origin, the Word of God; all his words and deeds are according to the Word, who possesses in himself the Father's will. Now he goes further and says that his Father is with him in what he does, showing that there is perfect identity of the Father's operations and his. And so, in the words and deeds of the sacred humanity, acting and speaking in the name of his Father, who sent him to do or say all he had determined, it is the Father himself acting and speaking. This occurs in two ways: wherever the Son is, there the Father is. Secondly, the Father's will resides substantially in the Son. In his sacred humanity he carries out this holy will in his words and deeds. This adorable will of the Father is manifest in everything the Man-God says or does.

Our Lord says: 'and he who sent me', 'And': to show that he is adding something to the first thought: 'he sent me': because this is something pertaining to his mission. It is the will of the Father sending his Son who acts and speaks with him. He who sent him is with him. Not only is the Word with him but to the presence of the Word, which became incarnate, is joined that of his Father. The Father is never separated from his Son. This also enhances our Lord's mission, since he who sent him is with him; and he is with him in carrying out his mission. Besides the Father is with him when his will is carried out. He acts directly himself in whatever his Son does. Not only is he present with him which indicates the depth of the truth that he speaks, namely that the Father is substantially present in everything the Son does, but he is present in all his activities. He never leaves him alone. This is what the Father does for his part; and why? Because Jesus in his sacred humanity was completely faithful in carrying out the wishes of the Father on every occasion. 'He always does the things that are pleasing to him'.

This proclaims the accomplishment of all that he wills; the plural ('things') shows the extension of the divine will, which is one in itself, to the diversity of objects it commands; 'always' shows that our Lord does nothing but execute this divine will.

Now Jesus in his humanity never acts except in harmony with the Father's will. He carries out everything he commands. But the Father's will dwells in Jesus. Because of this there is perfect identity between the Father's decisions made in eternity and the Son's actions in carrying out that adorable will. Our Lord expressed this wonderful truth when he said that his Father is with him and never abandons him.

Our Lord thus lets us into a great secret for our conduct. He is for us what his Father is for him. We receive everything from him and we must be in relation to him as he is in relation to his Father. All our actions in which our Lord does not figure are not holy actions, while on the contrary when he is with us all that we do is holy and perfect. It ennobles and raises our souls, and works for the greater glory of his Father and the salvation of many.

What are we to do so that he may accompany us in all our works? We are to act as he has done with his Father, in all things to do what is pleasing to him, to do only what is pleasing to him, and to this intent to have the eyes of our souls turned and fixed on him, so as to know his good pleasure in everything and receive his orders at all times. We shall then be quite certain he is with us, never to leave us on our own!

30. *Haec illo loquente, multi crediderunt in eum.*

30. *As he spoke thus, many believed in him.*

While Jesus was saying these things a good number believed in him. This was not the faith by which they merely believed his words and doctrine, but they believed 'in him'. They were touched by the grace coming from his lips. They believed these words which gave them hope. Later they would learn how to know and understand him. So they attached themselves to his person through a faith which was mingled with charity. They loved him and were disposed to give themselves to him. But it did not last long. Their ill-disposed hearts were full of self-love, and did not give grace time to plant divine faith in their hearts.



Another difficulty was their ignorance. They believed in our Lord because they did not know him; if he told them plainly there and then that he was the Son of God they would certainly blaspheme. Finally, a third difficulty: their faith was based only on the pleasure and satisfaction they felt from the grace of our Lord's words. But when, through their self-love, this sensible impression of grace vanished, they reverted to what they were before and the sentiment of faith disappeared on the spot. In our time this same thing happens to many souls. They begin to give themselves to our Lord and feel greatly attracted towards him, but these sentiments fall and fade away in a short time, as with the Jews here, because faith does not take root in them. They love themselves more than our Lord; they are opinionated, full of self-love, and if they seem to love our Lord and be attached to him it is largely through love of themselves.

### *Jesus and Abraham*

31. *Dicebat ergo Jesus ad eos, qui crediderunt ei, Judaeos: Si vos manseritis in sermone meo, vere discipuli mei eritis.*

31. *Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples.*

Our Lord saw their faith and at the same time their ignorance and bad dispositions, which were soon to overthrow the faith and attachment they manifested. So he gave the Jews a loving admonition to strengthen their faith and procure greater graces for them, but they rejected it, prompted by their great malice. Now he addressed himself to those who believed in him, for them he spoke the following words, but it was not for all who believe in him; it was only for the Jews who had manifested their sentiments of faith just now. For his previous disciples were satisfactorily confirmed in their faith for the moment.

Our divine Saviour knew well that they would misuse the grace he was going to impart in addressing these words to them and knew that these very words would cause them to lose what

they had just acquired. He spoke, nevertheless, according to his Father's will. They were words of grace, which malice transformed into judgment and condemnation.

These Jews had believed our Lord's promise that he would enlighten them later on ('to those who believed'). That had disposed them towards him. He takes account of this docility and submission of their minds to his word when he says that if they persevere in this disposition and thus remain in his word they will truly be disciples. Our Lord's thought is that we remain in his word when our mind is docile and penetrated by the word, when our will relishes it and makes of it its joy and satisfaction, and when we persevere in it, applying it in practice. So he is saying that if they remain faithful in this perfect docility to his word they will truly be his disciples.

He says: 'If you persevere', if you *on your part* are faithful, you will be numbered among my disciples. You are not that yet, therefore I give you no enlightenment; but if you respond to my grace and remain docile, then you will truly be my disciples, and I will introduce you into my most intimate secrets and give you the knowledge I promised just now. By this our Lord shows that if the merits of his Passion are not applied to all, it is not his fault. It is due to lack of correspondence to, and perseverance in, the first graces received. He had said above: 'all of you will know'. This is our Lord's desire, his real will. He died for all, but fidelity is essential. 'If you remain faithful'. This is the adorable goodness of our Saviour, who is always ready to give us his graces, offering them to us, waiting at our door. If we do not receive them, it is because we refuse his mercy. That he is still talking of the cross and of the knowledge promised is clear from what he says: 'you will be my disciples'. It is not for now. And in the following verse, 'you will know', our Lord adds, 'truly', to show that they will enter into perfect intimacy with him, where he will instruct them perfectly and without reservation.

On the contrary, if they remain always in their bad dispositions they will not be 'truly his disciples', for he will only

---

half instruct them, or rather tell them very little, since he could not say who he was. To be a true disciple one must know, accept and follow the whole doctrine of one's master.

Our Lord thus shows us that he is not satisfied with mere sentiments of faith and love. He wants docile souls who persevere in the doctrine and in the interior word of which he has been speaking, so that he can give himself to them and grant them that intimacy which makes great saints. He wants to give a fullness of his light and admit them into holy familiarity. Otherwise he will be reserved with souls and give himself to them only partially and according to their dispositions.

32. *Et cognoscetis veritatem,  
et veritas liberabit vos.*

32. *And you will know the truth,  
and the truth will make you free."*

To acquire knowledge of our Lord and his mysteries and to know ourselves it is not enough to have the faith, we must persevere in it. Not by a passing sensitive feeling does the soul acquire the light of our Lord, for that faith would not be rooted. But if we persevere in our Lord's word we acquire his divine light and come to know the eternal truth living and dwelling in our Lord's sacred humanity. This is not that superficial and philosophical or natural knowledge by which one knows a thing exists. This is the true knowledge of faith by which we believe that the Word of God himself is in our Lord, with a certitude based on God's revelation. This is genuine faith, although very weak and clouded at the beginning; as one perseveres, it becomes strong and more extensive, giving a revelation and intimate knowledge of our Lord's divinity and all his mysteries through the intimate union it establishes between the light of the word and our intelligence

Through this faith the divine light comes to dwell in us, and the more we progress in a persevering faith the more it extends and spreads in our souls, then little by little it masters all the passions and evil inclinations that always remain in our flesh. It so greatly strengthens our souls and takes hold of them that they are

freed of the wicked attacks of their sworn enemies that formerly controlled them.

By these words our Lord consoled and encouraged the Jews who believed in him. They had a dead faith: they were still wholly slaves of their flesh and its concupiscences. Moreover our Lord spoke and they did not understand. So he urged them to persevere in the right direction. Through this perseverance they would acquire a living faith that would penetrate their souls and enlighten them on the eternal truth, which they were unable to know heretofore because of their predominant vices estranging them from that truth. If they had persevered, our Lord's divine goodness would have continued to dispose them to receive this knowledge, and then he would have delivered them from the concupiscences that ruled them. This perseverance of faith would also have procured for the Jews a second liberation – from servitude to the law (of the Old Testament). The law was only a faint image of this eternal truth which was to appear.

The divine truth, once known, delivers from what was only an image and liberates from its slavery. Our Lord's crucifixion was like the promulgation of this divine truth fixed to the cross and suspended from it (cf. Col 2:14) to be seen and known by all. And really it was from the cross that the truth became known ('when you shall have lifted me up you will know that I am'). That explains how the law of slavery was abolished by our Lord's death.

By this gentle exhortation to perseverance our Lord gives us a lesson that quite a number of priests do not follow. When we meet ignorant and boorish people who have faith which is strong but obscure, leaving them in their vices and superstitions, instead of attacking their superstitions and constantly speaking about their false faith, we should, on the contrary, gently exhort them to persevere in their good sentiments towards our Lord and his holy religion. We should not extinguish the small spark that still remains but use their present faith to teach them gradually how to come to genuine faith, enlightening them little by little until the



divine truth of an enlightened faith removes their vices and defects.

33. *Responderunt ei: Semen  
Abraham sumus, et nemini  
servivimus unquam; quomodo  
tu dicis: Liberi eritis?*

33. *They answered him, "We are  
descendants of Abraham, and have  
never been in bondage to anyone.  
How is it that you say, 'You will  
be made free'?"*

The Jews, instead of being touched by our Lord's gentleness and goodness – for he had promised them a great recompense if they persevered – were, on the contrary, offended by his words and retorted with bitterness. This flowed from their pride, which was hurt and shocked by our Lord's most consoling words: 'And the truth shall make you free'. They understood that he regarded them as a people of slaves and servants not understanding what servitude he meant. They sensed that he referred to the supernatural constitution of the people of God, because they knew well that he did not interfere in the temporal oppressions they were suffering. Therefore, they saw there was question of a spiritual servitude they did not understand, from which our Lord said they would be delivered through the truth he would reveal.

This thought irritated them, since they were extremely proud of their supernatural privilege. They looked upon all other peoples on earth as their slaves, and they as the only free people, so much so that it was an axiom among them: the children of Israel are kings.

Seeing this privilege taken from them, and being implicitly called servants, they felt humiliated and were led to extreme measures against our Lord. This is why they said: 'We are descendants of Abraham'. This was their great title of freedom but they did not know it was only valid for their nation as long as Abraham was their father in faith. They said that they had never served anyone, although they knew they had been slaves in Babylon, and at this time were slaves of the Romans. But they did

not speak of physical servitude but of one that pertained to the nation's supernatural constitution.

34. *Respondit eis Jesus: Amen, amen, dico vobis: quia omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati.*

34. *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin.*

35. *Servus autem non manet in domo in aeternum: filius autem manet in aeternum.*

35. *The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever.*

36. *Si ergo vos filius liberaverit vere liberi eritis.*

36. *So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed'.*

Our Lord shows them in these verses that they are servants in a twofold way, that is, they cannot free themselves from servitude. Having been freed from one they fell into another. They are therefore, first of all, servants of sin.

And who could deliver them from this servitude except the law and its observances and figures – given life however, by the soul of all deliverance, namely, faith in the Messiah? The law itself was a source of servitude (to those who obeyed it blindly – ed.). When it freed the Jews from servitude to sin, it made them its own slaves. This (old – ed.) law which induced a spirit of servitude was able to free from the servitude of sin and give entrance into the household of God only in so far as it was itself part of that household. This law of servitude would not last forever as part of that household but would soon be abolished. Just as a servant does not remain forever in the house of the father of the family – he is there only as long as the father keeps him in his service and that of his family. In the end he is dismissed. This is what happened to the Old Law. Servitude to this law is now unable to deliver people from servitude to sin. Consequently there came a time when those who remained in servitude to the law were simultaneously in servitude to sin. This was so because this

enslaving law was no longer in force in the household of God. The father of the family wished to have nothing more to do with it.

But the son remains in the house all the time, he is never sent away. Consequently, at any time, those who are delivered by him are truly free, they do not become servants but are children of the father of the family. For he who delivers us from the spiritual servitude of sin does it only by giving us his own status through a spiritual sharing. The law gave the status of servants, and the Son gives the status of children to those who remain in the house for good like himself. Thus if the Son liberates us we are truly free, that is, we are free in every sense because we have the status of children. But if he was not the Son we would not be free in every sense; Moses could free the children of Abraham only to make them servants of his law.

In the first of these three verses our Lord is insistent about the slavery of sin: 'Amen, amen, I say to you'. The Jews imagined the practices of the law were sufficient, and after that they could commit all the sins proposed by their passions and concupiscences. Now our Lord wanted them to realize that they were slaves of sin in great need of liberation; for their status as children of Abraham and their law would not liberate them as long as they continued to commit sin. 'He who commits sin' means not only a sinful action committed, but its continuity through the disposition a person maintains to commit that sin again.

In the second verse our Lord shows the parallel between liberation by the Son and liberation by the law. Even if the law delivers, it remains a servant. The servant will soon be dismissed (i.e. when the Old Law is abolished – ed.) and will no longer be able to free people. After that he shows the superiority of the Son, who always remains with us.

In the third verse, finally, he draws the conclusion and shows that the only deliverance to give true freedom is the Son's, because that of the servant (i.e. the Old Law) makes the liberated one a slave to the servant himself (the Old Law – ed.).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>37. <i>Scio quia filii Abrahae estis; sed quaeritis me interficere, quia sermo meus non capit in vobis.</i></p> <p>38. <i>Ego quod vidi apud Patrem meum, loquor; et vos quae vidistis apud patrem vestrum, facitis.</i></p> | <p>37. <i>I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you.</i></p> <p>38. <i>I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."</i></p> |
|---|---|

Having explained the slavery or servitude (to sin and law – ed.), he had in mind and the advantage of being freed from it by the Son rather than by the servant, (i.e. the Old Law – ed.) Our Lord speaks to the Jews in the following verses about their status as children of Abraham according to the flesh, which cannot deliver them from the slavery of the devil. One may belong to Abraham by carnal descent and simultaneously belong to the devil in a spiritual way. He shows at the same time that this is the main reason they hate him and cannot understand him. It seems that later on these wretched people made use of our Lord's words with a mind to kill him. The more he explained, the more their anger increased. This is why he said he knew they were children of Abraham.

He said this according to their meaning, namely, that they were descendants through the flesh; but it is a small matter to be a child of Abraham in the flesh if the spirit is lacking, the principal and important thing, for one is not truly a child of Abraham before God if one is not so in spirit. Only then does this sonship give a true status to the soul and make it heir to the promise. This is what our Lord said to the Jews: 'I know you are children of Abraham according to the flesh, as you say, but my word takes no hold of you and your exorbitant malice tries to kill me. And why is my word unacceptable to you? It is because Abraham is not your father according to the spirit; in this you have another father, whose works you accomplish. This is why my words have no



effect on you and also why you want to kill me. This you learn from your father'.

Here our Lord says they sought to kill him because his words had no effect on them; Jesus' divine words were not relished because he spoke what he heard from his Father. His words were divine, and the Jews were, in spirit, children of the devil, who did only what they saw their father do. This means that, since their mind was under the devil's influence by the sin they were slaves to, they conceived only evil and sin. That was their basic reason for not understanding our Lord's word and being affected by it. Therefore, two obstacles prevented our Lord's divine words from penetrating these souls, lost through their malice; first, they were children of the devil according to the spirit; second, our Lord spoke only what he heard from his Father (and they would not listen – ed.). These two obstacles together, which form only one, are the true reasons for the hardening of heart of these unfortunate people.

Since the divine word could not make an impression on them they were influenced more and more by the devil, who let them see and conceive only meanness and malice. They acted according to the inspiration of the spirit of darkness and therefore wanted to kill our Lord. They showed how true the words of divine Wisdom were: they were children of the devil, proving that their souls were handed over and sold to the enemy of God. For, as it is according to God's essence to be in opposition to sin, so it belongs to the very nature of sin, and consequently of the devil, to be in opposition to God. Hence all who belong to this enemy of God tend the same way. There is opposition and conflict between everything of God and everything of the devil.

But one who is entirely given over to the devil, so identified with him through sinful dispositions that he seems to have the devil's nature, so encrusted is sin in his soul, such a one is called a child of the devil. For as a child has his father's nature and substance so has such a one the devil's – sin, that is, as the principle and moving power of his whole life and actions. Those

who exist in this degree of malice are necessarily opposed to God and everything that comes from God, like the devil to a higher degree. And this is what happened to the Jews our Lord was speaking of; if they did not know the divine Master or understand his words at all, it was because their malice rejected all the overtures of his divine word. And if his words entered into their hearts for an instant, they were immediately cast aside by the malice that rose up against them, and this through the evil instinct of sin. Sin cannot receive what comes from God but necessarily rejects it.

Besides this revulsion of mind against knowing divine truth there is the still more terrible revulsion of will. This enables us to see how strong and violent was their revulsion of their intelligence, for the strength of action of the will always corresponds to the strength of action of the intellect. Now their revulsion went to the limit here, even wanting to destroy the divine Being. The Jews showed to what extent they were delivered over to the devil, to his sentiments and dispositions, for their opposition to God aimed at his very destruction and it is impossible to go further than that.

It is true that they did not know our Lord, but neither was their opposition rational. They let themselves be moved by a sinful diabolical instinct, which controlled and possessed them and made them antagonistic to God, whom they sensed in those divine words. The devil himself did not know him, but nevertheless resisted him from the beginning with all his might. If the Jews had known that he was the Son of God, if they had seen him so clearly that they could have no illusions about him, they would not have dared to try to kill him, nor even to oppose him openly. Not that they would not have harboured the same malice and opposition in their hearts, but they would not have dared, they would have trembled. For sin can never face God's almighty holiness. It is crushed by it, although the natural antagonism remains. Moreover the natural weakness of the creature is overpowered by God's omnipotent strength, which the creature

---

sees capable of crushing it. The proof is that not even the demons would dare to resist him directly, and still less the Jews. 'If they had known they would never have crucified the Lord of glory' (1 Cor 2:8).

39. *Responderunt, et dixerunt ei:  
Pater noster Abraham est. Dixit  
eis Jesus: Si filii Abrahae estis, opera  
Abrahae facite.*

39. *They answered him, "Abraham  
is our father." Jesus said to them,  
"If you were Abraham's  
children you would do what  
Abraham did,*

40. *Nunc autem quaeritis me  
interficere, hominem, qui veritatem  
vobis locutus sum, quam audiui a Deo:  
hoc Abraham non fecit.*

40. *but now you seek to kill me, a  
man who has told you the truth  
which I heard from God; this is not  
what Abraham did.*

The Jews, with bad intent, hearing our Lord say again that they did the works of their father, were angered by the words, for it meant their father was a murderer. So they replied that Abraham was their father, therefore they were not the children of a criminal. They still did not understand that he spoke of a spiritual parenthood. He explained: 'If you are truly Abraham's children, you ought to do the works of Abraham: animated by his spirit, having his dispositions, act as Abraham would act in your place and as he did while alive'. But instead of acting like this, they sought on the contrary to kill him because he told them the truth he heard from his Father, that is, which his Father had charged him to proclaim.

He said 'man' because they thought they would be killing only a man; but they still wanted to kill him because of the word of God he proclaimed. And it is this word alone that annoyed them and put the thought into their heads to kill him.

41. *Vos facitis opera patris vestri.  
Dixerunt itaque ei: Nos ex  
fornicatione non sumus nati:  
unum patrem habemus Deum.*

41. *You do what your father did."  
They said to him, "We were not  
born of fornication; we have one  
Father, even God."*

Our Lord added that since they wanted to kill him they were not doing the works of Abraham; they had another father in spirit, for Abraham had never done such a thing. This malice in their deeds was inspired by their father, who was not their father according to bodily generation but through spiritual corruption. As our Lord did not explain who this father was and why he constantly referred to another father, while still recognizing Abraham's paternity, it dawned on them at last that he meant another kind of parenthood, one according to the spirit. So they said they were not children of fornication but legitimate children, who therefore belonged to the people of God. So they were children of God and had only God for their Father, who is the Father of all Abraham's children.

They continued to think, therefore, that to be children of God it was enough to be Abraham's children according to the flesh, and they looked upon all gentiles as not belonging to the children of God. Actually this is still their opinion, as they look upon all Christians as well as pagans as strangers to God for the supreme reason that they are not Abraham's children. Perhaps they also wanted to exclude children born of adultery, whom the law excluded from the assembly of God's people. So they said: 'We were not born of fornication: we belong to the people of God and have only one Father, who is God'.

They were coarse, unable to grasp the idea that genuine divine filiation is of the soul, not of the body, and that the body does not enter the question.

42. *Dixit ergo eis Jesus: Si Deus Pater vester esset, diligeretis utique me: ego enim ex Deo processi, et veni: neque enim meipso veni, sed ille me misit.*

42. *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.*

Our Lord showed them the error of the idea with which they flattered themselves. He had already demonstrated it saying that their evil sentiments and deeds were their father's. Here he



adduces still another proof: 'If God were your Father...' In the order of nature every child loves its father and all that pertains to him and comes from him. With all the more reason, in the spiritual order children of God will love what pertains to God and all that comes from God their Father, from whom they are as it were exiled on this earth.

To explain this more radically, one must remember that in the spiritual order everything is more perfect than in the material. Thus fatherhood and filiation, which exist in both orders, are more perfect in the spiritual and supernatural order than in the material order. And the more perfectly we are children of God the more perfect are spiritual fatherhood and filiation. Human carnal filiation is only a figure of the filiation of the children of God. As our fathers are the principle of existence and life in our body, likewise God is the principle of the existence and life of our souls, if we are truly children of God. But there is an incomparably higher perfection in the birth God gives us than in the birth our human fathers give.

My father according to the flesh begot me outside himself. The more my body developed, the more I became separated and independent. And once I had become fully a man I no longer seemed to be my father's son, so much did I appear a man apart; all the being I had received from my father was no longer in him but was concentrated in myself. The principle of existence which he gave me had so grown and developed, thanks to extraneous principles, that my being no longer seemed to be what he gave me. I was no longer beholden to him except by the laws of the Creator, of whom he was representative and image for me.

However, the generation and birth God gave our souls is a different story. God begets us in himself, and not by placing us outside himself. The more perfect our spiritual and supernatural childhood is, the more we are united to God, the more we dwell in his bosom. His generating us is not the affair of a passing moment but, like all God's works, a continual act and as soon as he ceased begetting us we would cease to be his children. He himself

nourishes and develops the germ of divine life which he placed in our souls. It is he who develops and matures us, so much so that, as our souls become more perfect, we become children of God more perfectly. We become more perfectly dependent on our heavenly Father, our life is less and less our own and more and more his, our soul's life is more centred on our Father than on ourselves. The further we go, the more our Father's life appears in ours, and the more the works of our souls not only seem to be his but really are.

This is a perfect begetting, incomparably more perfect than our carnal generation, but it has not the perfection of our Lord's sacred humanity, of which it is only an image and partial participation, although it is as perfect as our weakness and misery can bear. The sacred humanity of Jesus is perfectly begotten, (i.e. sanctified, made holy – ed.), in the Father's bosom, but the more the Son returns to the Father's bosom, (that is by doing his will – ed.), the more perfectly is he 'begotten'. The sacred humanity of Jesus participates in everything – in all the qualities – present in the Word. It shares perfectly and by nature in the further sanctification that takes place in communion with the Father as in all the divine perfections that this process of sanctification entails.

Nevertheless, perfect as it is, even this sanctification of the humanity of Jesus is only a shadow of the eternal generation of the divine Word (second person of the Trinity – ed.). This process of sanctification of the humanity of Jesus, this new birth, is as it were natural (because of its union with the divinity). It takes place because Jesus' human nature is assumed into the divine person and shares in his divine life. In that sense it is something completely natural to such a being. On the other hand the eternal generation of the Word is essential to his being (as God – ed.) and equally essential as the fatherhood of God. Our sharing in the sonship of Jesus is a share in the sonship of his *humanity*. Through union with his humanity we share in the divinity of the Word itself. And it is through Our Lord that we acquire this interior holiness or, better put, that we are taken over by our heavenly

Father. That is why he says: 'If the Son makes you free you will be free indeed' (cf. v. 36) through sharing in the (adoptive) sonship of Jesus himself.

From what has been said about the nature of our divine generation we can understand our Lord's thought, that we must do the works of our Father, for we are truly his children according to the soul. The perfection of divine childhood over natural childhood does not consist only in its essence but also in the laws God established about the relation of a child to its father.

It is a general law in creation that everything must tend toward its principle of origin. That is true even for insensate things. Throw a stone in the air and it will fall back to the earth from which it was made. When the human being was condemned to death for his sin, God said his body would return to the earth from which it was made. By the same law a son will always feel a natural inclination gravitating him towards his father in love, docility and respect, and towards everything that pertains to him and comes from him. But this law exists much more perfectly in the filiation of the children of God for, beyond the reasons drawn from his greatness, perfections and loveliness, and the grace of the children of God which he grants us – beyond all these reasons, which should increase the love of a son for his father, the children of God have their Father's life in them all the time and consequently his sentiments and affections. Moreover, since this divine fatherhood always tends to draw us to itself, that is, to God, it must necessarily establish this love towards him and his Son, who comes from him, for this love is nothing else than the tendency of our will towards the object that attracts its delight. This object is our heavenly Father, since we are his children only in so far as we have his life in our will.

It follows that if we are children of God we must love Our Lord since he comes from God. His human nature shares in the Father's divinity, and because of that he is the source of our life and, in a sense, our true 'father': 'If God were your Father, you

would also love me, because I proceeded from God'. Moreover, Our Lord came from God for us, for love for us, for our good, and precisely to draw us into this process of sanctification: 'I have proceeded and have come'. Even further Our Lord came from God that we might have this gift of divine sonship through him alone and through no one else and in no other way.

The very fact that we are children of God means that we receive this divine life from him, and him alone. If we are children of God, we are so because of him. The movement of our will towards our Father must be drawn from us by Our Lord. It passes through him to the Father. This is not his own doing, as he has not come of his own accord so that we should go to our Father through him. Rather this divine Father sent him to us and draws our love to himself through his Son and through him alone. 'Nor have I come of myself, but he sent me'. The 'nor' adds emphasis. It would have been enough to say he had come from his Father's bosom to draw all people and communicate his divine life. But even more, he did not come of himself: the Father sent him, the Father draws us by his Son, whom he sent to us for this purpose. He draws us to his Son in order that through him he may draw us to his own bosom to be his children. Manifestly then those who do not love our Lord or who oppose him are not children of God.

When our Lord says 'I proceeded' he is not speaking of the eternal generation of the Word, for the Word does not proceed from his Father, he is begotten by the Father. He is referring to his Incarnation, and 'I came', is his birth. Now this operation is attributed to the Word as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, for St Paul says: 'He emptied himself'. (Phil 2:7) This is, par excellence, the work of the Blessed Trinity: 'Let us make man after our own image'. (Gen 1: 26) He is the human being par excellence.

43. *Quare loquelam meam  
non cognoscitis? quia non  
potestis audire sermonem meum.*

43. *Why do you not understand  
what I say? It is because you  
cannot bear to hear my word.*



Our Lord, issuing from his Father's bosom and coming into this world, speaks his Father's language, especially as he comes in the Father's name, sent by him to proclaim his word and doctrine. The Jews heard all the words but did not understand them. From this our Lord drew the conclusion of showing them that they were not children of God. What happened that they did not understand his word? The only reason was that they could not hear. The ear of the soul is like the ear of the body. Proper hearing demands a proper condition of the ear, attentive listening, absence of other noises that prevent the sound from being received distinctly; otherwise what we hear will be confused noises not the things said.

The same holds for spiritual hearing; this precisely was the misfortune of the Jews with regard to the word, and their sickness was their sin. Secondly, they were not trying to listen. They made efforts to hear the divine word externally but they did not try to listen with spiritual hearing. They did not apply their souls to grasp and understand the divine words, thanks to the opposition and repugnance by which they rejected the word and prevented it from entering their souls. This opposition and repugnance arose out of their evil inclinations and pride. Thirdly, they could not hear it on account of the loud noise of their evil passions, which led them to understand something totally different from the divine precepts and holy doctrine of the Son of God. So our Lord said to them: 'you cannot hear'. They would have had to overcome the evil things which presented so great an obstacle. Now these things cannot exist in children of God. By the very fact of being a child of God one is freed from the sin of repugnance, opposition and evil inclinations rooted in pride; one is not a slave of passions inimical to God. The Jews then were not children of God. Our Lord will complete the explanation in verse 47.

44. *Vos ex patre diabolo estis:  
et desideria patris vestri vultis  
facere; ille homicida erat ab initio,  
et in veritate non stetit, quia non est*

44. *You are of your father the devil,  
and your will is to do your father's  
desires. He was a murderer from  
the beginning, and has nothing to*

*veritas in eo. Cum loquitur mendacium,  
ex propriis loquitur, quia mendax est  
et pater ejus.*

*do with the truth, because there is  
no truth in him. When he lies, he  
speaks according to his own  
nature, for he is a liar and the  
father of lies.*

Our Lord has shown them that God was not their father nor were they acting according to Abraham and consequently they could not look upon Abraham as their father in spirit. It was the devil who imparted his spirit and ways to them – which is what he reveals in this verse. The devil then was their father, and by desiring to kill our Lord they wanted to act according to the desires of this iniquitous evil father. Although the Jews did not know our Lord clearly as the Son of God and simply desired to kill him as a man who displeased them, this does not change the fact that they were at the same time fulfilling the desires of the devil and acting under his immediate inspiration, by abandoning themselves to the devil's fury in their hearts, which were sold to him. Moreover, they wanted our Lord killed precisely because of the truth coming from his lips. In this they became inspired partners of the great opponent of truth and master of lies.

To show them that by planning his death they were executing the twofold desire of the enemy he showed them the nature of this despicable enemy of God. He was a murderer and liar from the very beginning. Our Lord uses the word 'homicide' because the Jews thought they were killing only a man; he knew they were incapable of understanding that he was Son of God; this would have made them guilty of an infinitely greater crime.

The devil was a murderer from the beginning. This means that his sinful nature was murderous. He always wanted to destroy God himself but never tried it for he knew it was absolutely impossible even to attempt, or even to attempt it on the blessed angels, whose happiness he cannot abide. But, unable to destroy God in himself, he tries to kill him in his image and he aims at this with might and main. Unable to destroy this real image in the blessed angels he does his best to destroy it in human

beings, in whom the image is living and perfect. That is why he tries to destroy it as much as possible, or at least disfigure it through sin, and even partially or temporarily destroy it by killing humans. That is why, too, it seems that our Lord was speaking here of the nature of the devil in himself and in his essence rather than of a particular desire.

There is another reason that he is a murderer. It comes from sin, which fills him with horrible malice and frightful pride, and gives him a hatred and jealousy of human beings. It constitutes this miserable creature's nature and character. He sees himself excluded from the happiness of possessing God, and that without redress, while we, poor and weak as we are, are overwhelmed with graces and favours, in the process of taking his place in the realm of glory. This fills him with inexpressible rage and drives him on unremittingly to destroy us.

'And he did not stand in the truth'; he was not fixed in truth. This seems to mean that he was never so for an instant and that, even from the first moment of his creation, instead of taking pleasure in God he took it only in himself. For to stand in the truth means to fix oneself in God, in the Word of God, who is the principle of every creature, the Word who is the truth by his very essence and from whom all truth flows. This evil creature never fixed his intelligence in God, but in himself independently of God; therefore it fixed itself in lies, in nothingness, the negation of truth. The essential being that is in God is truth; the creature is the figure of this truth, an outpouring and effusion of it; nothingness is negation. Sin is nothing but the act whereby an intellectual creature turns away from this eternal truth and rests in nothingness; it is to exist and live in a lie, to say Yes to what is No.

This is what the devil has done. Since at his origin he immediately entered into the lie he has never left it. During all this time, all his feelings, inclinations and tendencies are in opposition to the truth because they are all in the lie, and this in a continual way without the least interruption ever: 'he did not stand'. The

reason for this is that the truth is not in him. Every rational creature can feel and act only through a principle which gives life, or intellectual sentiment, which moves it in its activity. There exist only two principles: God, who is truth, and sin, which is lie, nothingness, the negation of truth and the exact opposite of God. The creature that finds itself in this sin, and has it as a principle of life, in no way has the truth as principle of its life and activity, is living in a lie it can never get out of. To get out of it for an instant, it would have to be in the truth for that instant. Now the devil has never had the truth even for one instant, so he has never ceased to live in lies. 'From the beginning' could also mean since human beings were created, for it was from that time on the devil acted out his fundamental urge to homicide, causing Adam to sin in order to kill the whole human race.

'The devil did not stand in the truth' can be understood similarly. 'Stood' points to perseverance, this would indicate he was in this condition for some time. On first sight, this explanation seems closer to the truth; for God created him good and in the state of grace; therefore, he would have been in the truth at least for a short moment. For the first explanation one could say that God's creative action placed him in the truth, but that the devil's first mature act was outside the truth: 'he did not stand' points to his own act and not to a passive state.

'When he speaks', that is, when he communicates his sentiments and tendencies to a soul, when he prompts it, showing it what to do, what then does he tell a soul? Lies, always lies! And so when he told the Jews to kill our Lord he gave to them sentiments and motives which were lies. This happens every time he speaks to souls – he communicates lies. Our Lord does not mean 'when sometimes he happens to tell an untruth'. Whenever he speaks, every time he speaks 'he tells lies' – at least every time he speaks according to his own will and not when he is forced to speak, for God sometimes forces him to utter things which are true, and even then he mingles lies with the truth, if he has the chance. And when he does tell lies, they spring from his very



nature, for he is a liar and so is his father. Pride is the devil's father, for pride begot him and pride made him a devil. So greatly is he identified with pride – which is essentially mendacious – that they became one nature.

Pride is a liar. Note that our Lord does not say that the devil and his father are a lie, but liars, that is, they are producers, fathers of the lie. Sin is a lie, pride is a liar because it tells the creature that there is an excellence in it which is not there at all. Pride was the father of the devil, it made him a devil, and it is also the principle of every lie, that is, of every sin. The demon is so identified with pride that he is a liar like it and is one and the same thing with it. Nothing can come from him but lies. This is the difference between the devil and a person upon earth who is given over to sin. A person upon earth who is thus a child of the devil does not become so identified with his father that he draws sin from his very substance and becomes a liar. He can always return to the possession of truth, for truth never leaves him, it constantly solicits him. The lie comes from his father (the devil), who brings the sin which flows from his nature into the person who of his own will delivers himself to it. The demon on the other hand has himself become the father of lies and the source whence sin and lies flow.

It follows from this that the Jews who sought to kill our Lord because of the truth which he spoke on behalf of God exhibited thereby the whole diabolical nature and by this very fact were children of the devil.

45. *Ego autem si veritatem dico,  
non creditis mihi.*

45. *But, because I tell the truth,  
you do not believe me.*

46. *Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato?  
Si veritatem dico vobis, quare  
non creditis mihi?*

46. *Which of you convicts me of sin?  
If I tell the truth, why do you not  
believe me?*

Our Lord has just shown them that they listen to the devil, the father of lies, obey him like children and carry out his desires.

Now in the following verses he takes up again what he said earlier and explains why they do not listen. He says: 'You listen to the devil and furthermore you surrender the assent of your mind and will to his lying words. You cling to all his inspirations, which are lies issuing from his nature: "When he lies he speaks of his own", but when I speak the truth you not only do not understand but your soul rebels and you do not believe me. And why do you not believe me? Is it because in your good will you believe I am capable of evil and sin, to the point of judging that I am not telling the truth? Who among you can accuse me of any sin whatsoever?'

Our Lord thus showed his unsinning nature and, as a consequence, no lie could issue from his mouth. He asked: 'Who will convict me of sin?', because if they cannot reproach him with fault nor suspect him of wrong they should believe in the holiness shown in his whole life and believe the holy words that fell from his lips. They should accept them as truth because everything pointed to the truth and the outstanding holiness of his person and of the wonderful doctrine he preached. Why then did they not believe him? This proves they were not of God.

47. *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit. Propterea vos non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis.*

47. *He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."*

Those who are of God, that is, those whose souls are dependent on God and under his influence, hear the words of God, discern them and relish them, for they have a mind turned towards him, and they love what comes from him. They are animated by the Spirit of God, who constantly strives to dispose the soul to receive the divine impulses that guide it and make it tend Godwards. Moreover, the same Spirit inspires sentiments and dispositions conformable to those which God's word produces; he appeases the opposed passions and improper inclinations, and at the very moment the divine words are uttered

the Spirit of God imprints a grace in the soul analogous to this divine word. Finally, by means of the divine Spirit, who dwells in the souls of the children of God, there exists a great conformity and remarkable attraction between the divine word and the soul which hears it.

Those who are not of God, that is, those who in all the details of their lives do not receive from God through the Holy Spirit the impulse and influence which stimulate their powers, cannot hear, that is, are unable to receive the word of God and believe in it. Such people receive their impulse from elsewhere: from their nature or the devil; they have different tastes, contrary habits, and a nature quite opposed to the divine word and divine impressions. Thus they are deprived of all the advantages which were described above for the true children of God. That is why the Jews did not believe. 'Therefore you do not listen'. Besides having the defects referred to above, they had not the advantages of the children of God for they were not of God.

48. *Responderunt ergo Judaei,  
et dixerunt ei: Nonne bene  
dicimus nos, quia Samaritanus  
es tu, et daemonium habes?*

48. *The Jews answered him, "Are  
we not right in saying that you are  
a Samaritan and have a demon?"*

This discourse was not very flattering to the Jews yet was so convincing that they had no reply. Although they understood it only partially, it angered them more and more against him who told the truth in order to bring them back to his Father out of his love for them. Having no answer they resorted to insult. They called him a Samaritan, because they considered him an enemy of the people of God, and possessed by the devil, because he told them things hidden in their thoughts and reduced them to silence.

49. *Respondit Jesus: Ego daemonium  
non habeo; sed honorifico Patrem  
meum, et vos inhonorastis me.*

49. *Jesus answered, "I have not  
a demon; but I honour my Father,  
and you dishonour me.*

The Jews said he was possessed by the devil, because he said things they could not answer. Our Lord said it was not the devil who inspired him in his words but that he was honouring his Father. He did not seek his own glory but his Father's honour. This he showed by answering with so much gentleness after they had insulted him with coarse insults and horrible blasphemies. When avenging his Father's honour he spoke forcefully and revealed their most intimate secrets. The Jews wanted to be known as children of his Father but it would not have been honourable for the Father to have and produce such children. The divine Lamb became a lion, attacked them, showed them what they really were and put them in their place. He avenged his Father's honour, he honoured his Father. He did this, not through want of affection and tenderness for them, but to honour his Father.

When he himself was attacked he became a lamb once more and spoke in mild terms, while the Jews did the opposite. Our Lord did not wish them ill or attack them personally; he loved them in spite of their wickedness and told them the truth, not to cause them grief but out of love for his Father, to honour him.

They answered with insults, saying he was possessed by the devil. Yet his word was not that of a person possessed. Everything about him was holy and admirable, but his words revealed them to be children of the devil. This is what our Lord said: 'The only reason I speak to you and enlighten you is to honour my Father. It is not myself I defend by these words, but my Father's honour, and because I honour my Father you dishonour me'. Our Lord did not dishonour the Jews by saying they were the devil's children for he was only saying what they were; and this he did on a mission from the Father, while the Jews did dishonour our Lord, saying he was something which he was not.

50. *Ego autem non quaero gloriam  
meam; est qui quaerat, et judicet.*

50. *Yet I do not seek my own  
glory; there is One who seeks it  
and he will be the judge.*



All those who do not honour our Lord and believe in him and his words will be judged and condemned, and all who believe in him and seek his glory will be glorified. This judgment will be made and this response granted by our Lord himself: 'and he gave him power to pronounce judgment'. But in this judgment and response our Lord will act only in virtue of his Father's will, that all who believe in his Son should enjoy and be clothed with his Son's glory, and that all who dishonour him and do not believe in him should be condemned and remain covered with all their sins. This is how the Father glorifies his Son, giving him his glory and placing everything under his dominion, he commands the whole world to honour him as himself. This is why our divine Master says he does not seek his own glory.

Although the Jews dishonour our Lord he does not reprehend them, because he seeks only his Father's glory. But he warns them that they will not escape for all that. There is another who will seek the glory of the Son of man, namely, the Father himself; he will seek his glory in those who honour and obey him through genuine faith. And he will judge those who have not received the Son or who have dishonoured him. Although his judgment is given to the Son by the Father – 'He has given all judgment to the Son', the Son will judge only by the Father's will, who wants those people to be condemned, and not through his own will, just because they resisted him. The Father's will is the only principle and measure of this judgment. Therefore the divine Wisdom and eternal Truth declares truthfully that his Father will judge.

Note that our Lord says in this place: 'I seek not my own glory'; he does not say: 'I do not judge', for he himself will truly judge. However, he will not judge because he seeks his own glory but because his Father seeks it, and this seeking of the Son's glory by the Father constitutes the whole judgment of the Son.

Observe too that our Lord does not say: 'there is one who seeks and one who judges' but 'there is one who seeks and judges', because the Father's judgment and the seeking of the

Son's glory are one and the same thing: the judgment flows from the seeking. The Father wants his Son's glory; he has decreed it in all his creatures; he seeks it in all, and those in which it is not found will be judged and condemned by the fact of this universal law; and it has been given to the Son to pronounce and execute the judgment.

51. *Amen, amen, dico vobis:  
si quis sermonem meum servaverit,  
mortem non videbit in aeternum.*

51. *Truly, truly, I say to you,  
if anyone keeps my word, he will  
never see death."*

Our divine Saviour, through his infinite love for these perverted souls, having shown them the judgment also showed them mercy, in order to touch them and draw them to himself. This same Father's will seeking his Son's glory constituted the judgment of those who did not believe but it also constituted salvation and life for those who would submit to and observe the divine words he proclaimed. Our good Saviour proclaimed the truths of his Father to teach them their present misfortune, so as to make of them true children of God and give them knowledge of his mysteries, which they were still unable to grasp because of the malice of their father (the devil) who was in them. For their part, instead of receiving the word and shaping their conduct accordingly so as to have life, they resisted it and delivered themselves even more to the dominion of death and Satan. This touched our most loving Saviour deeply and he solemnly protested against their conduct in order to impress them and make them acquire life: 'Amen, amen, I say to you'.

But so great was these unfortunate people's malice that even this new kindness itself scandalized them; they abused the grace and in utter wickedness sought to make use of it against him whose great wish it was to save them.

52. *Dixerunt ergo Judaei: Nunc  
cognovimus quia daemonium habes.*

52. *The Jews said to him, "Now  
we know that you have a demon.*

*Abraham mortuus est, et prophetae,  
et tu dicis: Si quis sermonem meum  
servaverit, non gustabit mortem  
in aeternum.*

*Abraham died, as did the prophets,  
and you say, 'If anyone keeps my  
word, he will never taste death'.*

53. *Numquid tu major es Patre nostro  
Abraham, qui mortuus est? Et  
Prophetae mortui sunt! Quem  
teipsum facis?*

53. *Are you greater than our father  
Abraham, who died! And the  
prophets died! Who do you claim  
to be?"*

The Jews, unable to understand our Lord's spiritual words, thought he meant the death of the body. Totally carnal as they were, they could not think beyond that; they were very happy to have found something with which to upbraid our Lord. They blasphemed and did not understand what divine Wisdom was saying. This they have in common with all badly disposed souls under the influence of some passion, however slightly violent or preoccupying, or with all those who conceive things only humanly or according to the low and defective tastes of nature; these are usually full of self-love, they desire to sit in judgment on everything. All these persons are unable to judge or even conceive divine things. Straightway they judge and condemn. Not only that, but they become angry and blaspheme against what they cannot see, without even examining the point.

Their bad disposition does not leave them time even to examine and consider the matter. It prevents them from grasping things from the right point of view and from having sufficient docility of mind to follow God's needed lights. Moreover, their evil intention turns them from the way of truth by which they would have seen correctly, and makes them start looking for a bad side of something. When one is full of malice one always finds a bad side; a malicious disposition and the general weakness of the human mind make one incapable of seeing the clarifying reasons. This evil often proceeds to loss and damnation. It causes great ruin in holy works undertaken for the glory of God and the salvation

of souls, or at least great harm to those who let themselves be controlled by nature and prejudice.

The malice of these unfortunate Jews went so far as to conclude that these holy words spoken solely for their salvation were inspired by a devil. 'Now we know'; the divine words finally convinced them!

This demonstrates how far human malice and blindness can go. And it should be a warning for us to be on our guard against our passions and natural inclinations, which can lead us so far. Their great argument to prove diabolic possession was that Abraham had died and the prophets had also died; and our Lord said that those who would do what he told them would not die. That would prove he was far superior to Abraham and the prophets, since he had such life in him that those who listened to and obeyed his words would not die. And Abraham and the prophets not only had not the power to give such permanent life to others but they could not have it for themselves.

The mistake of the Jews was in thinking in terms of temporal death. They were only flesh and could only see according to the flesh. Nevertheless their argument in its rigour was not less true or strong. But what surprises us and shows how their malice blinded them is that they saw no difficulty in the thing itself, namely, whether our Lord's word could give life; what shocked them was that he virtually claimed to be greater than Abraham and the prophets. This they considered monstrous and detestable: 'Whom do you make yourself?' And yet they were always convinced that the Messiah was greater than all the prophets and had greater power than Abraham. They all knew, however, that our Lord did say he was the Messiah, and they were constantly following him in this thought. If he simply told them he was the Messiah they would not have found that so strange and detestable. All the miracles he worked, as well as public talk, favoured this opinion, and shortly before this they had shared this opinion themselves. But their great malice and pride blinded them. They were still full of indignation and rage at hearing our



Lord say they were not children of Abraham but children of the devil. Their mind was still preoccupied with the thought of Abraham so that they were incensed against the divine Master.

That is why they did not rebuke him for claiming that he could prevent people from dying through believing and obeying his words (a thing which should be a greater difficulty than the one they were making). They attacked him for claiming to be greater than Abraham. They were furious that our Lord said they were not children of Abraham; now they are obsessed by another thought: 'How now! He makes himself out to be greater than Abraham, our father'. This thought drives them wild and succeeds in consolidating them in their blindness.

54. *Respondit Jesus: Si ego glorifico meipsum, gloria mea nihil est: est Pater meus qui glorificat me, quem vos dicitis, quia Deus vester est.*

54. *Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God.*

The Jews, still blind as to the person of our Lord and not knowing who he was, took him for an ordinary man; hearing him say such extraordinary things, they considered he was making himself out to be greater than he was. His doctrine, the ensemble of all his discourses and saintly and admirable conduct clearly showed that he sought only God's glory and did nothing for himself. Yet the prejudice, evil passions, wicked inclinations, pride and malice of these people was working in them on the grand scale what each of these vices normally does in souls in relation to divine things and the holiest people.

The people subject to these passions and vices failed to see or notice all the beautiful holy things which came from the lips of our adorable Saviour, and the splendour that shone forth from all his conduct. And if, on occasion, they were unable to hide it or could not prevent themselves from giving homage to this incomparable holiness, the impression was quickly erased by their evil dispositions, and admiration changed to hatred and jealousy.

The Jews then, in spite of what they knew of our Lord, continued to claim that he was glorifying himself. So he answered them according to their own train of thought. They wanted at all costs to see in him a man who sought glory, so our Lord answered: 'If I glorify myself', that is, if this Son of man as you see me glorifies himself, his glory is nothing, for the Son of man having been taken from nothingness has no glory in himself; hence he cannot impart glory as from himself, whatever his excellence otherwise, which in fact surpasses all creatures in a way no angel, neither Cherubim nor Seraphim, could conceive. But the glory which this venerable humanity possesses comes to it from the divinity which is in it corporally, that is, substantially and incorporated or incarnate.

Thus, if it was the sacred humanity which glorified itself of itself, the Jews would have reason to say he was wrong. Indeed what made Abraham great was divine grace. His humanity was exceedingly great, rich and beautiful when considered as coming from the hand of God. It was incomparably superior to Abraham's as the sun in all its splendour is more wonderful than a miserable dark grain of sand. Nevertheless God's graces in Abraham were greater than the sacred humanity considered in itself and in its natural state, abstracting from the immense treasure which it possesses so perfectly. This is why the divine Saviour said: 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing'. He added that neither was it he who glorified himself. For when the humanity spoke of its greatness it was not glorifying itself, but it was glorifying the Father's glory which was in it. When people glorify themselves before others on whatever good quality it may be, it is not God they glorify nor is God glorifying them; it is nothingness glorifying nothingness through another nothingness, and consequently the glory is nothing: 'it is nothing'.

People who glorify themselves and want to put themselves forward in the minds and hearts of others on account of some quality are nothing. This quality is only a created quality, even

when it is in the supernatural order, and hence it is nothing. It is still more evidently nothingness for themselves because it is a borrowed quality, put there only to draw honour and glory to him who put it there, whose it is. Therefore the glory someone wants to attribute to his or her own person is a glory of nothingness, or rather it is not there at all, it exists only in the imagination. But this was not our Lord's situation.

There was another who glorified him, and our Lord was not glorifying himself but was glorifying only the one who glorified him. His Father, in investing him with his divinity, gave the Son of Man all his divine glory. Therefore every time the Son speaks about himself, he must speak the truth and glorify the divinity where the divinity wants to be most glorified. So we can easily see that when he speaks of his glory he does not glorify himself but the divinity which is in him corporeally.

Our Lord explains here who his Father is who glorified him – it is he whom the Jews called their God. The Father of our Lord is the God of the whole universe, of the bad as well as the good, in the sense that it is he who created all things and has sovereign power over all creatures. But when it is said that he is the God of a people or an individual, this means something more. It means he communicates himself to this people or person and makes the influence of his divinity felt, that this people or individual recognizes him, honours and respects him as God, in which case the relations between Creator and creature are as the creative divinity wills. It is in this sense that our Lord said in another place to the Sadducees: 'He is not the God of the dead but of the living' (Mt 22:23).

In the wicked who do not honour God or serve him, all the communications willed by the Creator between himself and the creature are broken. There remains only the general title of Creator and conserver of every creature and the particular relations resulting therefrom, without the special quality of understanding and intimate relations between the divinity and a soul which is in his grace and serves and recognizes him.

---

This was precisely the Jews' misfortune. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was no longer theirs; the communications were broken. It is what our divine Wisdom said to them: 'Whom you say is your God'.

They called him their God, they hypocritically feigned to serve him. This is what our Lord said: 'they neither served nor knew him.

55. *Et non cognovistis eum: Ego autem novi eum; et si dixero quia non scio eum, ero similis vobis mendax. Sed scio eum, et sermonem ejus servo.*

55. *But you have not known him; I know him. If I said, I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I do know him and I keep his word.*

'And you have not known him'. Our Lord did not mean the knowledge acquired from books and through the words of people, things learnt by heart. For that kind of knowledge of God the Jews had. They knew what was said of him in the Old Testament, at least enough to know that he was the Creator of all things and some of his more important attributes. But our Lord spoke of the intimate knowledge given to a soul in divine grace. The soul is not always aware of having this kind of knowledge, for it is a view of pure faith, in which the senses are not involved, but this is nonetheless a real knowledge, more perfect than that which is acquired only from books, in which grace plays no part. This latter is artificial, not really giving the divinity to a soul and bringing true light, while the knowledge which comes through grace is a share in the very knowledge which the sacred humanity has.

Our Lord added that he himself knew his Father. By this he meant the perfect possession he had of his Father's whole divinity through the Word substantially in him, which was the perfect and substantial image of the Father, and through whose vision the humanity saw the Father himself. He added: 'If I were to say: I do not know him...' Our Lord seems to apologize to these unfortunate people for speaking in favour of his own glory. For,



having this kind of knowledge of the divinity, he could not say of himself that he was only a human being. To speak of himself as not clothed with glory would be lying like the Jews. The Jews said that the Father was their God and that God was their Father, which was not true; they did not even know him. And if our Lord, on the contrary, said he did not know the Father it would be the opposite lie to that of the Jews and still not true. Our Lord repeated that he knew the Father and kept his word, that is, obeyed his will. He said 'word', referring to the unique and eternal word dwelling substantially in him. He wanted to manifest his personal union with the Word: 'I know him'. The perfection of his operation in everything is divine because the divine Word acts through and in the sacred humanity, which in everything is submissive and docile to the Father's eternal word: 'And I keep his word'.

56. *Abraham pater vester exsultavit  
ut videret diem meum; vidit, et  
gavisus est.*

56. *Your father Abraham rejoiced  
that he was to see my day; he saw  
it and was glad."*

After our Lord had shown them that he was not seeking his own glory he came back to the Jews' main thought. They found it extraordinary for him to say he was more than Abraham. And he says he is so much more than Abraham that this Patriarch while he was on earth, longed to see the day our Lord would appear on earth. And now that he has seen it he rejoices.

This shows sufficiently how superior our Lord was to Abraham. To show Abraham's longings our Lord said 'he rejoiced', for these burning longings and desires of the patriarchs were always reinforced by elations of the mind and accompanied by great interior joy. This itself shows our Lord's greatness above Abraham's, because the patriarch was so carried away by his desires. He saw it and rejoiced, because he saw his liberator come at last, he who would soon lead him from his place of exile, make him rejoice in his God and clothe him in his glory.

57. *Dixerunt ergo Judaei ad eum:  
Quinquaginta annos nondum habes,  
et Abraham vidisti?*

57. *The Jews then said to him, "You  
are not yet fifty years old, and have  
you seen Abraham?"*

The Jews suspected from all our Lord said in this discourse that he wanted to be believed in as Son of God and hence had placed himself above Abraham. However, as they did not understand his words they had a confused idea of it all and were in vague doubt. As their fury against our adorable Saviour had risen to such a pitch, they no longer sought anything but to hear what they wanted so that they could fulfil their malicious intentions and appease their rage. They were so full of wickedness that they were no longer capable of understanding the simplest words. They gave impossible meanings to his words, because they wanted to hear what they wanted him to say. Our Lord said of Abraham: 'He saw and was glad'. They concluded that Jesus was saying he had seen Abraham when the patriarch lived on earth. So they put the question: 'How can you say you have seen Abraham when you are not yet fifty?' They say fifty to make sure! By this questioning they hoped to draw from our Saviour's lips what they understood in fact.

58. *Dixit eis Jesus: Amen, amen,  
dico vobis, antequam Abraham fieret,  
ego sum.*

58. *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I  
say to you, before Abraham was,  
I am."*

It is sometimes in the order of divine providence to furnish sinners with the wherewithal for their own destruction to be brought about by their own malice. It is not God's will that they be lost but that they be abandoned to their malice. The occasions which providence offers are good in themselves, made for their salvation and that of others; their malice alone turns these things into poison for their ruin and death. That is what happened these unfortunate Jews in this circumstance. They were animated by unbridled malice and got what they desired. The divine Master told them in proper terms that he lived before Abraham, which

meant clearly that he was the Son of God. He could easily have shown them that they misunderstood his words, but the Father's divine will wanted him to speak along their lines and tell them, for the sake of the salvation of many, what they desired to know even though it be to their own loss.

59. *Tulerunt ergo lapides, ut jacerent  
in eum; Jesus autem abscondit se,  
et exiit de templo.*

59. *So they took up stones to throw  
at him; but Jesus hid himself and  
went out of the temple.*

Look what the fine sentiment of faith which these people had at the beginning of the discourse had come to! It shows the great misfortune of a soul that has tasted of the Lord and not persevered. Its malice becomes greater than before, and such souls often go to greater extremes than if they had never begun to serve our Lord. The Jews' fury had come to a peak. They wanted to fulfil the wicked plans they had formed and have our Lord killed. But it was not yet time. The Saviour using his almighty power, hid himself from their eyes. He had been standing in the midst of them; there was no human means of escaping. Hence he made his sacred humanity invisible and withdrew from the temple in their presence, unseen by them. Jesus cannot remain in the midst of dissension; wherever it is, he withdraws.

Available from Paraclete Press  
 169 Booterstown Avenue, Co. Dublin.  
 Telephone: 353 1 288 1789  
 Fax: 353 1 283 4307

Star of Jacob by Helen Walker Homan	£3.95	Something Else, Poems by Cothraí Gogan CSSp	£2.95
Life Began at Forty by Bernard Kelly CSSp	£4.95	To the Ends of the Earth (History of the Congregation) by Henry Koren CSSp	£15.00
You Have Laid Your Hand on Me (Libermann quotes, A. Gilbert & M. Fay)	£2.95	Blessed Daniel Brottier, Friend of Youth	£1.50
Francis Libermann Liberator of the Oppressed (4 Colours, A4 Booklet)	£1.95	A Gentle Way to God, by A. Gilbert tr. Myles Fay CSSp	£5.95
Francis Libermann Apostle of Africa, Ml. O'Carroll C.T.S.	£0.50	Led by the Spirit, Life of Claude Poullart des Places by Seán Farragher CSSp	£10.00
Libermann's Commentary on St John's Gospel by Fr Ml. Cahill	£20.00	Père Leman, Educator and Missionary by Seán Farragher CSSp	£10.00
By the Working of the Holy Spirit by John Ahearne CSSp	£4.00	Dev and his Alma Mater by Seán Farragher CSSp	£10.00
Jacques Desiré Laval, The Spirit of Mauritius by Fr J. Fitzsimmons	£2.95	No Hands But Yours by Kevin Doheny CSSp	£9.95
Blessed Jacques Desiré Laval Apostle of Mauritius by Fr Ml. O'Carroll CSSp	£2.95	A Light to the Gentiles (Life of Francis Libermann) by Adrian L. Van Kaam	£15.00
Man of Action Man of God, Daniel Brottier by Alphonse Gilbert tr. Myles Fay CSSp	£2.95	HGM: Spiritans in Nairobi 1899-1999 by Cothraí Gogan CSSp Postage (surface): £1.50	£6.00





# JESUS THROUGH JEWISH EYES

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

Francis Mary Paul Libermann CSSp  
*Translated by Myles L. Fay CSSp*

PART 2  
*Chapters V - VIII*

How does a modern Jew see Jesus? Francis Libermann's conversion to Christianity belongs to a Jewish movement towards Jesus dating to the mid-decades of the 19th century in France. Born in Saverne in eastern France in 1802, Francis Libermann was the son of the local rabbi. As his father's favourite son, he was meant to succeed him. But when he left the ghetto, he drifted into fashionable French atheism. The light came with a copy of St John's Gospel in unpointed Hebrew which a fellow student asked him to translate.

Baptized a Catholic on Christmas Eve 1826, Libermann decided to study for the priesthood in the Paris diocese. He went on, however, to found a missionary society. This he subsequently merged with the Holy Ghost Congregation. Libermann wrote this commentary in 1840 while awaiting papal approval for his mission initiatives.

Libermann's devotion to Jesus was intense. He saw him as the Holy One of Israel in human flesh. Everything a devout and zealous Jew feels about his God is experienced by Libermann in his relation with Jesus. For him, he is the Messiah, the Saviour. To know him is to live. Everything else in life must be subordinated to this adoring and loving relationship. That relationship is real, reciprocal, communicative, implying immediate and mutual knowledge. The knowledge brings him, like Moses before the burning bush, to his knees before the mystery of God revealed to his loving gaze.

The Gospel of St John for Francis Libermann was not a book about past but about the way he and every Christian called to faith can relate to the One True God made flesh in Jesus Christ.